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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

GIGANTIC GREYHAWK MAP INSIDE!

DUNGEON®

ISSUE 120 · MARCH 2005

BRAVE THE LOST TEMPLE OF DEMOGORGON!

AH LA SMURF

SEAN K REYNOLDS GOES APE

JACKALWERES, KENKU, PAZUZU, PAZUZU, PAZUZU!

NEW COLUMNS BY WIL WHEATON AND MONTE COOK

ISSUE #120 MARCH 2005 VOLUME 19, NO 3

DUNGEON

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SPECIAL FEATURE

GREYHAWK MAP INSERT

Our giant four-part World of Greyhawk map just keeps growing with our third eight-panel poster. Will your party survive the dangers of the Tomb of Horrors and the scheming of the Overking's court in Kalstrand? What secrets lie undiscovered in the secret plateau of the Scarlet Brotherhood?

ADVENTURES

18 THE OBSIDIAN EYE
by Nicolas Logue and Brendan Victorson
Shifting desert sands reveal an ancient obsidian obelisk from a forgotten age. Undead arise from the dunes, jackalweres launch attacks on caravans and villages, and the mysterious Order of the Obsidian Eye has designs of its own. A D&D adventure for 4th-level characters.

40 FORSAKEN ARCH
by Timothy J. Haener
The pearl divers of Shoalbury are in trouble. A band of birdlike kenku and ogres have been ambushing and plundering outgoing shipments of pearls, and the villagers are growing desperate. And why are the bandits stealing eyes from the bodies of their victims? A D&D adventure for 7th-level characters.

64 LOST TEMPLE OF DEMOGORGON
by Sean K Reynolds
His name has inspired fear in legions of heroes, and his savage, feral cult has lurked in the dismal reaches of the world for countless ages. He is Demogorgon, and his temples are nightmare realms haunted by primeval menaces and hateful legacies from a time when the world was savage. A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

ON THE COVER

Steve Prescott first came to our attention with several stunning pieces in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* hardcover. This striking image of the Prince of Demons marks Prescott's first D&D magazine cover. It certainly won't be his last!

"At least none can foretell what will come to pass, if we take this road or that. But it seems to me now clear which is the road that we must take. The westward road seems easiest. Therefore it must be shunned. It will be watched. Too often the Elves have fled that way. Now at this last we must take a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril—to Mordor. We must send the Ring to the Fire."

J.R.R. Tolkien
The Lord of the Rings, Volume II

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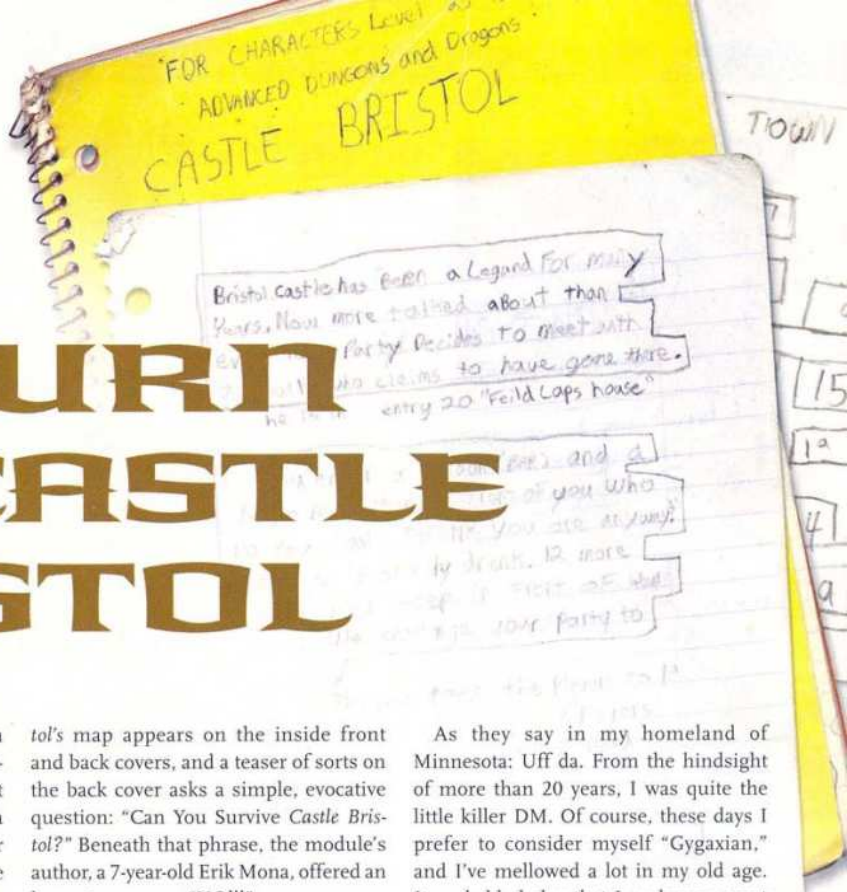
DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *Dungeon*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 4/28/05. Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

The Obsidian Eye (120OE1DN)
Forsaken Arch (120FA1DN)
Lost Temple of Demogorgon (120LT1DN)


FOR CHARACTERS Level
ADVANCED DUNGEONS and Dragons
CASTLE BRISTOL
TOWN
Bristol Castle has been a Legend for many
Years. Now more talked about than
Party decides to meet with
to have gone there.
entry 20 "Feild Cops house"

RETURN TO CASTLE BRISTOL

I recently flew back to Minnesota to celebrate my grandmother's 90th birthday. On the first night, my parents sat me down for a serious talk. "Son," I recall my father saying. "You moved out of the house 11 years ago. And I'm afraid the time has come. Your mother and I want your bedroom back."

"So while you're here you'll have to clean it," my mother said, resisting the urge to add "for once."

So, for once, I found myself deep in the bowels of a bedroom walk-in closet at my parents' house, digging for childhood treasures in the strata of a 20-year-old mess. Cast-off *DRAGON* magazines went into a pile next to ancient, mostly crushed boxed sets. Precarious piles of baseball cards cluttered a whole shelf. Finally, I made my way to a musty box filled with grade school-era ephemera. And there, at the bottom of the box, I rediscovered *Castle Bristol*.

Castle Bristol, AN ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure "for characters level 25–100," fills the first six pages of a banana yellow spiral notebook. Its cover features a crude pencil drawing of a tower perched impossibly upon a steep cliff, a series of floating magic disks forming a stairway trailing off the left edge of the page. Like other adventures of its era, *Castle Bristol's* map appears on the inside front and back covers, and a teaser of sorts on the back cover asks a simple, evocative question: "Can You Survive *Castle Bristol?*" Beneath that phrase, the module's author, a 7-year-old Erik Mona, offered an honest response: "NO!!!"

One thing's for sure. As a kid, I was a rather... aggressive Dungeon Master. Here's a sample from the adventure:

> A small dog has a scroll around his neck. The scroll says "Scroll of Dragon Slaying." The room appears to be empty.

And some helpful words for the DM: "The room is empty. The dog is an explosion dog which will explode if removed. The scroll is a scroll of death on user."

Explosion dog? Scroll of death on user? *Explosion dog?*

It gets worse. Here's the final encounter:

> There is a junction in the road, left or right. There is a skeleton pointing to the left side.

Following the skeleton's advice gets the PCs to an abandoned section of a rundown town. Going to the right triggers the following boxed text:

> The road disappears and you fall into the depths of the Abyss. Now be a good loser and hand over your characters to the DM.

As they say in my homeland of Minnesota: Uff da. From the hindsight of more than 20 years, I was quite the little killer DM. Of course, these days I prefer to consider myself "Gygaxian," and I've mellowed a lot in my old age. It probably helps that I no longer must contend with 100th-level characters who wield *vorpal swords* and Captain America's shield. From the vantage of 2005, *Castle Bristol* doesn't look like much, but my young friends and I had an awful lot of fun adventuring within it.

I like to think that each issue of *DUNGEON* might find its way into the hands of another young DM out there. Will a handful of kids gather around a table to face the dangers of the "Lost Temple of Demogorgon," or brave the quest for the *Obsidian Eye*? I really hope so.

To you young readers out there: prepare your spells and sharpen your swords. Adventure awaits in these pages.

Watch out for explosion dogs.

ERIK

Erik Mona
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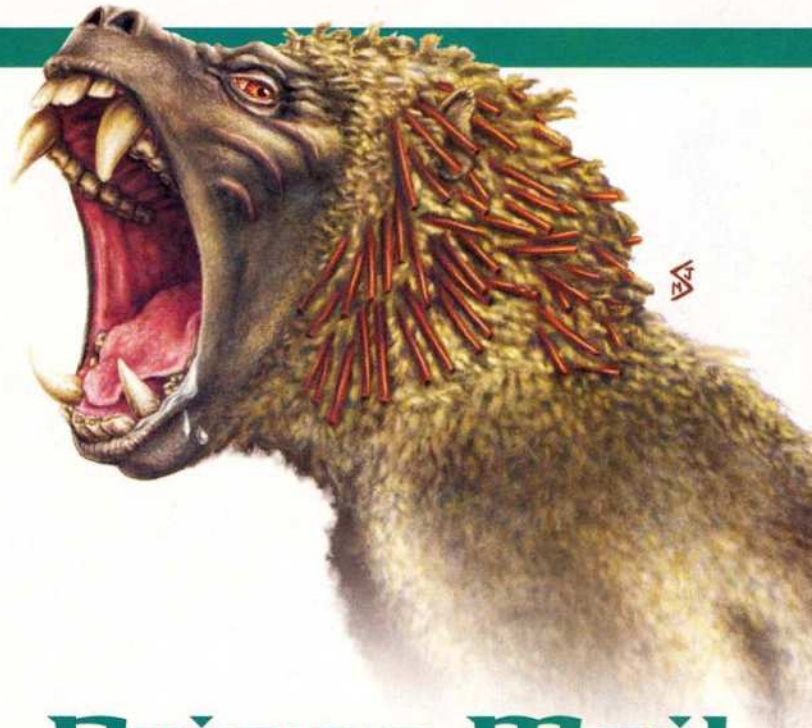

Prison Mail

Illustration by Mike Schley

Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to: Prison Mail, Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200 or send an email to dungeon@paizo.com.

Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

Dungeon #117

December's issue introduced the haunted city of Istivin in "Touch of the Abyss," the first installment of Greg Vaughan's *City of Shadows* three-adventure Campaign Arc. Readers rushed to the Internet to offer breathless praise, but the issue generated relatively few hard-copy letters. Technology's ceaseless march will soon force us to start grabbing letters off our messageboards. You regular posters have been warned. ASEO, Diaglo, I'm looking at you.

Issue #117 also showcased "Fallen Angel," EBERRON creator Keith Baker's second *DUNGEON* adventure. Look for more EBERRON goodness from the exemplary Mr. Baker in the coming months. Nicholas Logue's "The Winding Way" brought an Eastern flair to *DUNGEON* with a truly revolting monastery packed with ghosts and deadly traps.

For reader feedback on the issue, drop by our messageboards. For musings on the magazine in general, read on...

Epic Ennui

I have been a longtime fan of both *DUNGEON* and *DRAGON*, and certainly will continue to enjoy both. I was, however, disappointed to learn that the new direction of *DUNGEON* will be to include sets of three adventures focused only on low-, mid-, and high-level parties. In short, my question to the editorial staff is: what about epic play? I very much enjoy reading and using the *Epic Level Handbook*. Indeed, I was slightly saddened to hear that the Shackled City Adventure Path had ended with only a brief mention of possible epic level play beyond its current conclusion; I had been secretly hoping for another installment with epic level challenges. I also read that the next planned Adventure Path series will only have 20 installments, reflecting character levels. It is my hope that, from time to time, one or both of *DUNGEON* and *DRAGON* will include some content focused on epic level play.

Thanks for the fine and informative publications.

Thomas Genese
Portsmouth, Virginia

Thanks for the feedback, Thomas. Reading your letter reminded me of crunching dozens of two-page epic stat blocks for FORGOTTEN REALMS: Faiths & Pantheons. *Then I blacked out for an hour. The staff tells me they found me in a pool of my own drool muttering something about having maxed out every skill and still having points left over. Weird.*

We're currently working on a very special epic level treat here in DUNGEON, *and I think it's reasonable to expect a limited amount (meaning "at least once a year") of support for the rules system both here and in* DRAGON. *Look for "The Quicksilver Hourglass," an epic level adventure, in the next few months.*

More Maure, Shackled City?

Hello! It's the first time that I'm writing to *DUNGEON* Prison Mail to answer a request from the magazine:

1. *DUNGEON* #112 was great. It had really good content and the main feature, "Maure Castle," was brilliant! I loved the adventure. I would like to see more ancient adventures transposed to D&D 3.5. All of the ones that have been rewritten (*Return to*

This Month in Dragon

March #329

Dragon gives you the best in gaming, presenting new official rules, original game content, great advice, and the perfect inspiration for your D&D game. In each issue, you'll also see what cool products are on the horizon, find out what other players are up to, and get an insider's look at the industry. Get more from your game: Get *Dragon!*

The Legacy of Beowulf
by Nicholas Herold
Match your blade against true Giants in the Earth with statistics and background from one of the greatest works of fantasy literature ever put to pen. Can your characters defeat Grendel, Grendel's Mother, the Firedrake, or even Beowulf himself?

The Petit Tarrasque (And Other Stories)
by Kyla Ward
Get the skinny on the real-world origins of some of D&D's most fearsome creatures, including the basilisk, cockatrice, golem, gorgon, medusa, catoblepas, leucrotta, salamander, and more. Plus, learn how to alter classic creatures' stats to match their mythological origins.

Mesopotamian Mythos
by David Schwartz
The cradle of civilization offers a complete pantheon for your D&D campaign.

Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Pazuzu
by James Jacobs
The first in a series of articles examining the character, cults, and thralls of D&D's classic demon princes. This month: The Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms comes home to roost.

Plus!
The Ecology of the Kenku, A Novel Approach: EBERRON's *Marked for Death*, and of course, Class Acts, Bazaar of the Bizarre, Under Command, Silicon Sorcery, First Watch, Scale Mail, Sage Advice, and comics.

the Temple of Elemental Evil, The Isle of Dread) spiked my interest and the interest of my players. You should update other "classic" adventures. Keep up the good work.

2. I was wondering if the adventures in the famous Adventure Path will be reprinted in a stand-alone format or online. The reason I ask is because I didn't manage to get DUNGEON #104 from my supplier because he didn't receive it, and the issue is "out of stock" at paizo.com. I started a campaign based on your adventures from the Adventure Path, and now I'm stuck because I don't have issue #104. Please give me some feedback on this subject.
3. The new format of DUNGEON meets with my approval. Keep up the good work! Now, if I could do a request and get this published on the magazine, could we have a DUNGEON adventure with the villain Warduke (Critical Threat, #105)? I didn't have the chance to see the D&D cartoons featuring Warduke, but after seeing his stats and picture in the magazine... Respect!

Thanks to the staff of DUNGEON for this great magazine. Keep it up!

João Almeida
Lisbon, Portugal

Look for a return visit to Maure Castle at least once in 2005. Next issue's "Fiend's Embrace" ties into the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth AD&D adventure, as will another adventure set to be published before the year is out. Any time we revisit an old adventure, we receive almost unanimous praise, so look for the trend to continue (but we don't want to overplay our hand—too much of a good thing is still too much). The next letter is a fairly typical example of the sorts of feedback generated by our recent delves into the world of nostalgia. Even as you read this, we're looking for a way to make a print compilation of the Shackled City Adventure Path a reality. Watch this space for more details. Warduke and the Horned Society will no doubt turn up again in these pages. Be sure to read "Strike on the Rabid Dawn," in DUNGEON *#111, in which your favorite man in the blue helmet makes a cameo.*

Mmmm... Forbidden City...

"Maure Castle" was one of the best issues of DUNGEON I've ever read, and the artwork was also the best I've ever seen in a roleplaying magazine. You've asked your readers if they wanted more levels of Maure Castle and my answer is YES, PLEASE!!!

I liked this issue so much that I would love to see other older scenarios "revisited" in the future; why not once a year? I can think of at least three old mid-level classics that would be perfect choices for such super-adventures:

1. I1 *Dwellers of the Forbidden City*: The scenario that gave us the yuan-ti! A flawed classic that had tons of potential; back then it suffered from the 32-page-limit and most areas of the city remained undeveloped, but there were some great adventure hooks! This could be a wonderful scenario for levels 5–8.
2. I7 *Baltron's Beacon:* A little known gem written by the co-author of *Oasis of the White Palm*. This mysterious tower can now be found somewhere in the Hool Marshes (*LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* #1), so it's even part of the "official canon." I think this would also be a good opportunity to introduce the Cult of the Black Flame to the GREYHAWK setting.
3. X2 *Castle Amber:* Must I really say much about this module? The original version was already so full of adventure and excitement that a lot of the descriptions of rooms or NPCs were rather brief; a "Castle Amber-mega-edition" might be a good opportunity to correct that.

Finally I would like to say that I can't wait for the three-part series by Greg A. Vaughan. "Tammeraut's Fate" is my all-time-favorite DUNGEON scenario and I would love to read more GREYHAWK adventures from this author!

Keep up the good work! The new DUNGEON is the best ever!!

Jens Kaufmann
Marburg, Germany

Que Array?

I've just submitted a Critical Threat, and am working on a piece for The Cast section of the Campaign Workbook, and have used the elite array point allocation system for both. I used it mainly because it seems as close to a standard system as you can get, and it's what Wizards used to create all the NPCs in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. I was wondering if you had a preference on how NPCs are created for use in *Dungeon* magazine? Thanks for your time.

Greg Cugini
Via Email

In general, important characters should be built using the elite array. Less important characters like thugs and guards should be built using the elite or standard array. For the big important bad guy, just use the stats you think are appropriate. If that means going above or below one of the standard point builds, so be it.

Vile It Up!

Hey, folks. I'm a fairly new subscriber, so this is the first letter that I've written. I like what you're doing to *Dungeon*, even if I am a little remorseful over the loss of *Polyhedron*. Are you planning any more vile adventures any time soon?

Anyway, I'm writing because I noticed that *Dungeon* always seems to show up in book and game stores before I receive it. Why is that?

Zeke Kalish-Reed
Via Email

Would you believe "it's a long story?" Basically, subscriber copies are mailed directly from the printer (located in the American Midwest) immediately after they have been printed. At the same time, a bunch of magazines go to our distribution company, who sends the magazines to the various newsstands who are kind enough to carry them all over the world, including your friendly local game store.

The problem is that the distributor has a much more efficient way of distributing magazines than does the United States Postal Service, which means that the stores sometimes receive their magazines before subscribers do. This absolutely drives us up the wall, since we believe that subscribers should be the very first to receive their issues. Lately, we've taken some steps to ensure that it goes down that way, mostly by "stagger shipping" subscriber copies before we send the magazine to our distributor. Early responses seem to suggest that the plan is working, but since there are countless variables once an issue hits the U.S. Mail, it's something we'll probably never be able to lick completely for every single subscriber.

All I can say is that we're aware of the problem and have taken steps to address it. Please don't hesitate to let us know how we're doing on our messageboards at paizo.com.

Missing Maps of Mystery

Please provide Maps of Mystery again! As an extremely busy DM (with two children ages 4 and 6 weeks), I found these to be extremely helpful. I was wondering if you would provide larger maps, such as those you printed for the Forgotten Realms, only make it topographical so that DMs can still place cities and nations but have the world already in front of them. Thanks.

Jonathan Dale
Lancaster, Pa

Look for the Maps of Mystery to return soon. We miss them terribly. As for the topographical map, well, the massive four-part World of Greyhawk map we're currently publishing will have to suffice for now. I do like the idea of a "fill in yourself" map, however, and will consider including something like that later this year.

Font Troubles

I have been attempting to find a legend for the icons that appear next to entries in *Dungeon* adventures (such as the knight, dragon, etc.). I haven't been able to find one within the pages of *Dungeon* or on your website. (Perhaps I have overlooked it?) Would it be possible for you to send me a legend for these icons or post one on your website?

Additionally, I would like to use these icons in my own adventures (which I usually write in Microsoft Word). Is this permissible?

Kerry Jordan
Via Email

The icons come from a proprietary font designed by Wizards of the Coast for the Dragonlance: Fifth Age *diceless roleplaying game. Unfortunately, that means it is not widely available outside the office. We do hope to offer another* Dungeon*-related font on our website soon, but more on that next issue...*

Relaunch Reactions

I've never written to *Dragon* or *Dungeon* before, but I thought that I would poke my head in and say my piece. I would really like to give all of you guys at both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* a great big Huzzah!

I have been an on-again off-again purchaser of both products for about 15 years now. I started playing D&D when I was 10, and I just celebrated my 25th birthday. I have great memories of playing D&D before I knew what edition was what. I have more great memories of AD&D second edition and I really enjoyed the changes in third edition as well. 3.5 seemed like a no-brainer to me.

The recent changes in both your publications are to me a reflection back to the days when I started buying your magazines. *Dungeon* was meant for DMs, and *Dragon* was meant for everyone. It seemed to me that lately *Dragon* had been trying to be everything to everyone, and wasn't doing a good enough job at any of the things it was trying to be. I like the new focus, I like the new organization, and I enjoy the articles—as always.

I know you guys get lots of flak for "over-advertising" Wizards of the Coast releases, but as far as I see it, that's your job. However, I like that the magazines are still interesting and useful, even if the topic is a campaign setting I'm not currently playing.

So to you guys, cheers! Job well done, and you deserve a pat on the back for all the hard work you put into each publication

so that I can get my 20-minute fix of new D&D stuff once a month!

Jeff Closs
Quesnel, British Columbia
Canada

Next Month in Dungeon

April #121

The World of D&D Poster Map (4 of 4)
The fourth and final giant poster map by all-star cartographer Robert Lazzaretti reveals the infamous Causway of Fiends, the beleaguered Duchy of Tenh, and the trackless lands of the Snow Barbarians. At last, DUNGEON readers can chart our core D&D adventures on a world map fit for kings!

Fiend's Embrace
by Stephen S. Greer
Ages ago, the demon prince Graz'zt fashioned a cloak, the *Fiend's Embrace*, from the skin of a pit fiend and offered it as a gift to his lover, the witch-queen Iggwilv. Today, rumors claim that the *Fiend's Embrace* is hidden in a keep in the Cold Marshes—will agents of a jealous demigod get to the cloak before the PCs? A D&D adventure for 4th-level characters.

The Styes
by Richard Pett
Once, the Styes was the ocean gateway to a major city, her magnificent buildings crowning a man-made island held aloft on piers and boardwalks. Now, it has grown old and diseased, a perfect haven for sadists, cultists, and hungry things that flop and writhe. A D&D adventure for 9th-level characters.

Secrets of the Arch Wood
by Skip Williams
A few years ago, the swords of Archendale went ahead with plans to log a section of the Arch Wood near their borders. Yet only a year later, the logging stopped abruptly—Archendale's rulers did not reveal the reason, but that reason is about to make itself known. A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 13th-level characters.

Thanks for the kind words, Jeff, although given the amount of work that goes into one of these magazines, it pretty much gives me a heart attack to think that it only takes you 20 minutes to read it. The refocusing that began in DRAGON #323 and DUNGEON #114 continues each and every month, and we believe we're improving the magazines with each issue. Drop by our messageboards at paizo.com or send another letter to Prison Mail to let us know how we're doing!—Erik Mona

Gamer Seeking Gamer

I've been a long time player of D&D, quite frankly, for as long as I can remember. I've enjoyed your magazine for a long time as well. I took an extremely long break from the game when my old gaming group (made up of my sister, my father, and a few of our friends from our shooting team) moved away from each other. I've since started picking up the magazines again, and have done so for a little over a year now. I still don't play, but that hasn't stopped me from amassing a decent pile of the latest editions of the books to sit with my old 2nd and 1st edition pile.

I was a bit disappointed about the magazine at first, but I stuck to it since I always found something that was really interesting. But lately, I've been really engrossed with both DUNGEON and DRAGON, and like the way they are going. When I first saw Wil Save, I kinda rolled my eyes and figured it was just going to be a silly bit of fluff, and a waste of space. But even from the first article, I've really enjoyed it. I love Star Trek, but I never really put much thought into Wil Wheaton, so to be rather blunt I figured I wouldn't give a flying you-know-what about what he might have to say. But it really is a huge kick to read. A lot of what he writes hits very close to home for me. I know a number of people think it's a waste of space, but know that there's at least one person who looks forward to that page.

One last thing to add to this monstrosity—is there a good way to find players in my area easily? Is there some way to discern groups so it would be easier to find a group that would fit my gaming style? You may have gone over this in a previous issue, but I haven't seen it yet as I missed a few issues this year due to it being sold out at the only place I can usually find it.

Thanks for you time, and keep up the great work!

Gary Vikar Jr.
Via Email

It's good to have you back, Gary! As to the best way to find new players... I'm afraid there's not really a perfect solution. Many local game stores have bulletin boards where gamers can post invitations to new or ongoing campaigns, and internet message boards (like ours at paizo.com) are another great place to find gamers who might live closer than you think. As for determining if a new group is compatible with your gaming style... well, there's unfortunately no substitute I can think of for just playing a few games with the new group. And don't be afraid to adapt your own style to the new group as well!

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH DUNGEON

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THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK
LEGEND

Mountains

Volcano

Passage

Hills

Clear

Desert

Deciduous forest

Coniferous forest

Jungle

River

Swamp

Glacier

Village

Town

City

Castle

Ruin

Dungeon

The Obsidian Eye

by Nicolas Logue and Brendan Victorson
Illustrations by Ramon Perez
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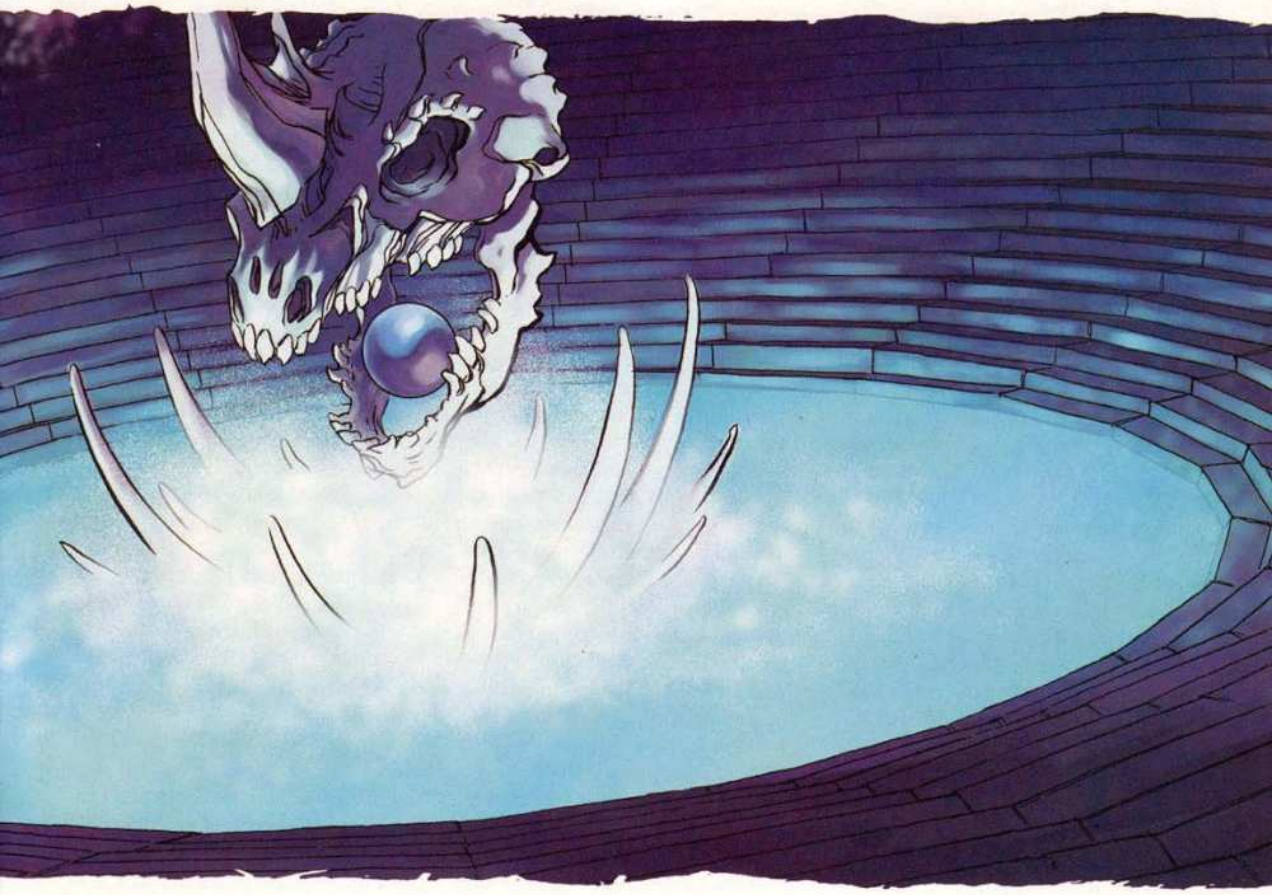
Any Setting • Low-Level (1st–5th) • Warm Desert & Dungeon Crawl



Thousands of years ago, a powerful family known as the Anuk brought myriad desert peoples together under one banner, crushing any who resisted. After they completed their conquest, the Anuk created one of the most glorious testaments to decadence the desert had ever seen, the wondrous city of Anuk-Saal. Less than ten generations after their glorious empire began, the Anuk died horribly in a fiery apocalypse. Yet despite this devastation something of the ancient days has survived under the sand and stone for hundreds of years.

"The Obsidian Eye" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for four 4th-level characters. Characters with the ability to survive harsh environments (especially druids and rangers) should prove especially helpful in surviving the trials of the desert. "The Obsidian Eye" can easily be placed into any campaign setting that includes a hot desert region. Note that this adventure features several rather difficult encounters, many of which can be better solved with foresight, stealth, and tactics; parties that favor the "rush in and attack" method of adventuring may find this adventure to be too difficult.

Adventure Background

The blood of the Anuk was strong, and their mastery of arcane magic allowed their kingdom to grow and prosper. Yet with this power came arrogance, for the Anuk came to believe that they alone could be trusted with such power. The family fell into the custom of inbreeding, and as a result the strength and sanity of their rulers waned. This regression culminated in the reign of the kingdom's final ruler: Anuk IX.

Anuk IX was deranged beyond measure—he believed his kingdom had gown rank with corruption that and his people were infested with foul malignancies of the spirit. He vowed to cleanse his city-state in a cataclysm of eldritch fire, after which the true citizens would arise from the ashes, pure and perfect. Anuk IX kept his plans secret, sharing the details with only his most trusted followers. He created a powerful artifact he called the *Obsidian Eye*, an item that would one day usher in his rebirth, as well as the return of the Anukar, his favored servants and minions. The insane king hid the *Obsidian Eye* and gathered the Anukar together in his palace. He prepared half of them for entombment with himself and his royal family, where they could protect him in the afterlife until

he was reborn from the *Obsidian Eye*. The other half he banished far beyond the reach of the coming cataclysm, commanding them to prepare for his return. These Anukar became known as the Order of the Obsidian Eye, and they swore secret oaths to Anuk IX and the dark powers that served him. As they passed beyond the fringe of Anuk-Saal's power, they felt a searing blast of heat upon their backs as the kingdom was consumed. They did not look back, knowing that it would mean certain death. For centuries, the Order has passed on its secrets to new members, keeping their mission and their oath of dark service alive through the ages.

A month ago, a great earthquake shook the region. Desert travelers now report that an obsidian obelisk has emerged from the sands deep in the desert. Shortly afterward a band of monks of the Order of the Obsidian Eye and their leader, a mysterious fiend-tainted man they call Harbinger, journeyed into the sands to seek out this monolith—a monolith said to mark the location of the *Obsidian Eye* itself. The time for Anuk IX's return is nigh.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive at a desert oasis named Kashral. That night the oasis is attacked by a group of jackalweres—dangerous animals with the ability to assume human form. The jackalweres are intent on abducting a local wizard named Jazeela. In the aftermath, the PCs are hired either to rescue Jazeela from her kidnappers, or are asked by Jazeela herself to investigate the link between the jackalweres and the mysterious black monolith recently unearthed by an earthquake

The PCs journey through the desert, facing terrible undead and other dangers. After reaching the obelisk, they find it has already been claimed by monks of the Order of the Obsidian Eye. The PCs fight to free the dozen slaves against a band of fanatic monks and their thri-kreen mercenaries, and in the end can even obtain the *Obsidian Eye* of Anuk-Saal.

Adventure Hooks

"The Obsidian Eye" begins as the oasis of Kashral is attacked. The reasons the PCs may have for being in the region should be somehow tied to the adventure's plot in order to give their journey into the desert more meaning. Any of the following adventure hooks work well to get the PCs into Kashral the day before the jackalwere attack.

- Rumors of a large black monolith thrust up through the desert sands by a recent earthquake have reached civilization. A number of scholars, sages, and archeologists are preparing expeditions to the site, but these affairs take time. One impatient noble named Loran Khurn can't wait—he approaches the PCs with an offer. If they can get to this mysterious monolith before any other archeological group, investigate the site, and secure any interesting artifacts or relics for his collection, he's willing to pay them a finder's fee of 500 gp. In addition, he promises to purchase any archaic works of art or relics from the site for 125% of their normal value.
- When the Order of the Obsidian Eye arrived at the monolith, they quickly realized that some excavation of the ruin would be required before they could enter it. As a result, their minions staged a few quick raids on small communities on the desert's edge, kidnapping several strong villagers to use as slave labor. One of these abductees happens to be related to someone important; a noble, a thieves' guild member, or a priest. The PCs are approached by a distraught family member or friend, who asks them to travel into the desert to save the victim. Their contact recommends that the PCs start their search at the desert settlement of Kashral, as its citizens know a great deal about the desert and its denizens. He promises a reward of 1,000 gp if the PCs can save the abductee.
- If you have the time and a player who might welcome some mystery in her character's background, have that PC experience a series of increasingly realistic and disturbing dreams about a black monolith rising from the desert sands. Later on, she might see undead rise from the sands as well, and at one point the PC might catch a glimpse of a sphere of blackness wedged in the jaws of a dragon's skull. When you're ready to start this adventure, casually introduce the party to a few rumors of a strange black monolith rising from the sands of a nearby desert during an earthquake, and rely on the dream-haunted PC to encourage the rest of the group to investigate it. The source of the PC's dreams is up to you. She might be receiving visions from a deity, or she might just be one of Anuk's descendants and the obelisk itself might be calling out to her in her dreams.

Chapter One: Paradise Lost

Kashral is a small hamlet near an oasis at the edge of a sprawling desert. Kashral is a welcome sight for caravans and travelers seeking to slake their thirst and enjoy much needed rest before continuing their arduous journeys through the sands. The hamlet is surrounded by a circle of palm and date trees, and the oasis itself consists of two large pools of sparkling pure water. Billowy pavilion tents of white trimmed with purple, blue, and gold spring from the lush green like silken flowers. Alongside the pavilion tents a few red brick buildings shimmer in the oppressive sun. A wooden water tower 20 feet in height is the tallest structure in the encampment.

KASHRAL

♛ **Kashral (hamlet)**: Conventional; AL LN; Population 146; 100 gp limit; Assets 730 gp; Isolated (95% human, 2% half-elf, 2% halfling, 1% other).

Authority Figure: Samuul Esterdark, overseer (LN male human aristocrat 2/rogue 2).

Important Characters: Jazeela Alsairan, local scholar (NG female elf wizard 5).

Meeting Samuul

Samuul Esterdark serves as Kashral's overseer and spokesperson. His presence and personality have attracted a large number of loyal followers, and his plain dealing and fair treatment of all

who pass through have earned him an excellent reputation. An obese individual with long black hair which he always keeps oiled and pulled back, Samuul is fond of perfumes and powders and wears several layers of light colored silks. He lives in a red brick building in the northwest corner of the oasis, where his three wives and numerous children while away the hours.

When the PCs arrive at the oasis, they are greeted a few hundred feet outside the ring of trees by two of Samuul's sworn swords. These warriors ask the PCs' business in the hamlet and then lead them in to the large pavilion tent in the center of the oasis. Only a few minutes later, Samuul himself (along with six more of his bodyguards) arrives to meet with the visitors. Samuul assumes the PCs are explorers seeking a place to stay for the night. He greets them pleasantly enough and offers them use of a spacious guest tent south of his own home for the affordable price of 5 sp per person.

Samuul's initial attitude is friendly. If he can be made helpful with a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, he allows the PCs to stay in a guest tent for free for 1d4 nights. In any event, he's happy to chat with the PCs about all manner of topics (though he favors mercantile gossip over anything else). If the PCs ask him about slavers or the mysterious black monolith, he admits that he's seen large groups of what he assumes to be slavers moving along the trade routes recently. They were headed deeper into the desert. Although Samuul himself detests the practice of slavery, the groups looked well-armed and they haven't accosted Kashral yet, so he's let them go for now. As for the black obelisk's appearance, he's heard of it but knows nothing of the details surrounding its origin—"Mysterious obelisks rising from the sands! Bad for business." He did hire a half-orc mercenary named Charnos to investigate the slavers—"Damned slavers are scaring off the traders! Bad for business." Charnos rode out into the sands two days ago to follow a set of fresh tracks discovered unsettlingly close to the oasis. Samuul expresses extreme confidence in the mercenary's martial skill and assures the PCs there will be no more trouble from the slavers—"That half-orc is going to be REAL bad for their business!"

Samuul recommends the PCs talk to the local scholar, an elf named Jazeela. She knows much more about the desert and its features, and would be the one to talk to learn more about the mysterious black monolith; Samuul is willing to introduce the PCs to her at any time.

Samuul Esterdark, male human aristocrat 2/rogue 2: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8–2 and 2d6–2; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +2 melee (1d4/18–20, *+1 kukri*); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding; AL LN; SV Fort –1,

Ref +4, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +10, Forgery +6, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +6, Profession (merchant) +6, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +9.

Feats: Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: *+1 kukri, potion of cure moderate wounds*, obsidian ring (worth 30 gp), gold ring (worth 25 gp), jade ring (worth 40 gp), 37 sp, 150 gp.

Samuul's Sworn Swords, male human warrior 1 (8): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk +4 melee (1d6+2/18–20, scimitar) +1 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); SA —; SQ —; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Ride +4.

Feats: Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

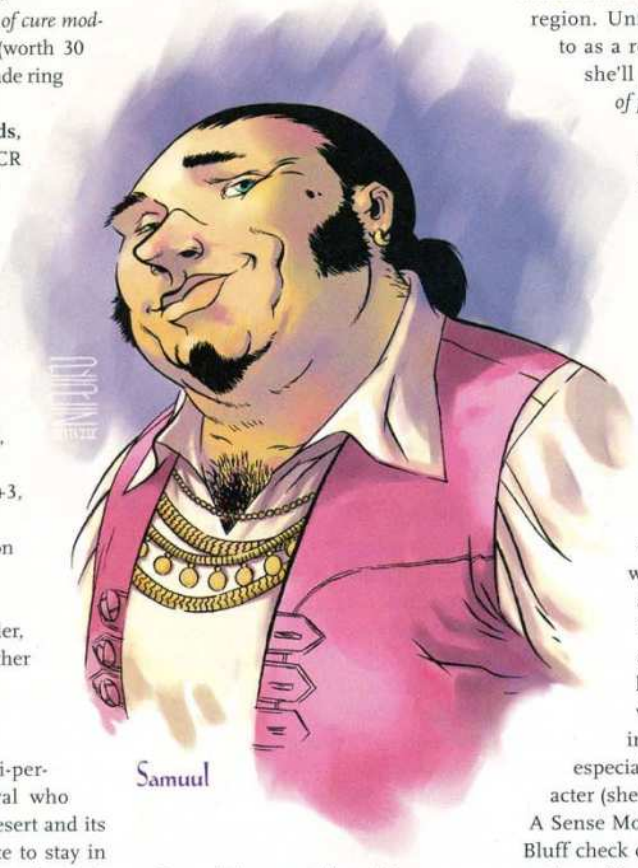
Languages: Common.

Possessions: Scimitar, buckler, longbow with 20 arrows, leather armor, 10 cp, 8 sp.

Meeting Jazeela

Jazeela Alsairan is a semi-permanent resident of Kashral who has a deep interest in the desert and its secrets. In return for a place to stay in Kashral, she offers her magic to the oasis as needed. Her tent is south of Samuul's home. The interior is pleasantly cool and lit by two softly glowing crystals, one yellow and one purple. A fine woven carpet depicting a battle between a manticore and a winged serpent lies on the floor. Jazeela herself is a bronze-skinned woman with blue eyes that match her sapphire earrings

Jazeela is a pleasant conversationalist, and understands that not everyone shares her passion for ruined cities and desert rock formations. If she meets someone with similar knowledge and interests, though, she can talk for hours. The nature of the black obelisk unearthed by the earthquake intrigues her greatly. She has cross-referenced several sources and has pinpointed the probable location of the monolith on one of her maps, and if the PCs indicate that they intend to investigate it she grows quite excited.



Samuul

One of the most disturbing rumors Jazeela's heard is that a group of slavers may have already claimed the monolith as a lair. She believes that members of this group belong to a sect known as the Order of the Obsidian Eye, a group founded by the rulers of ancient Anak-Saal, a once-great empire that ruled the region centuries ago before it was consumed in a vortex of fire. The Order of the Obsidian Eye is a martial order that follows a mysterious figure known only as "Harbinger." Jazeela fears that the monks of the Obsidian Eye are seeking a dangerous artifact that is also their namesake. Legends hold that the *Obsidian Eye* has the power to awaken great evil if it falls into the wrong hands. She desperately wants to travel to the obelisk and investigate the site, for if it is indeed the resting place of the *Obsidian Eye* she fears that if the Order gains control of the artifact it could spell doom for the entire region. Unfortunately, she has little to as a reward, but if the PCs ask she'll grudgingly offer her *ring of protection +1*.

Jazeela is well versed in the Anuk-Saal's history and the cataclysm Anuk IX brought down on his people, and can relate all of the information in the Adventure Background (save for the last paragraph) to the PCs. Yet for all her professed interest in ancient ruins, she is in fact a bookworm with little actual field experience. Her rather uneventful journey to Kashral was actually her life's great adventure to this point. Secretly fascinated with adventurers and their wild lifestyles, Jazeela could well become romantically interested in one of the PCs, especially a rogue or similar character (she likes the dangerous ones). A Sense Motive check opposed by her Bluff check can reveal her veiled infatuation, although she won't act on her desires at this time. Instead she funnels her desires into tortured poetry in her travel journal every night.

Jazeela Alsairan, female elf wizard 5: CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d4+5; hp 19; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d4/18–20, silver kukri) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA spells; SQ low-light vision, summon familiar; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +5, Concentration +3, Decipher Script +16, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +9, Listen +1, Search +5, Spellcraft +11, Spot +1.

Feats: Brew Potion, Diligent, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Decipher Script).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Terran.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 5): 0—*detect magic, lights, mending, open/close*; 1st—*endure elements, identify, mage armor, shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace, knock, protection from arrows*; 3rd—*dispel magic, fly*.

Spellbook: 0—all cantrips; 1st—*alarm, endure elements, identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace, detect thoughts, knock, protection from arrows, web*; 3rd—*dispel magic, fly, hold person, slow*.

Possessions: Masterwork silver kukri, light crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection +1, wand of magic missile* (3rd, 31 charges), pouch with 21 sp and 17 gp.

Solath, hawk familiar: hp 10; *Monster Manual* 273.

Blood in the Sand (EL 7)

Despite Samuul's confidence in his abilities, the half-orc Charnos never made it to the obelisk. He was easily intercepted and dispatched by a group of three dangerous mercenaries retained by the Order of the Obsidian Eye for their knowledge of the region and their efficiency in dealing with trouble. These three mercenaries are jackalweres—savage creatures that can assume a human guise. Still, his capture would have had little impact on the hamlet of Kashral, had not the jackalweres learned something of great import during their traditional torturing of dinner. They learned of Jazeela, and of her uncanny knack for deciphering ancient languages. They reported their discovery to Harbinger, and he immediately ordered the three to travel to Kashral and abduct the elf woman. Harbinger hopes to use her skills to decipher some runes in the Black Obelisk that could hold the key to gaining access to the inner sanctum, in which the *Obsidian Eye* is kept.

This event should occur at twilight after the PCs arrive at Kashral (or, if they decide to leave before then, as the PCs are leaving the oasis). Note that this event is significantly higher in EL than a party of fourth-level characters is likely to be ready to handle. The situation should be somewhat balanced, though, since Samuul, Jazeela, and several bodyguards are present when it occurs. Before it starts, take a moment to note each PCs' Listen and Spot bonus, as you'll need these modifiers later. As the encounter begins, a large brutish looking half-orc wearing chainmail and an intimidating helm rides lazily into the village on a majestic black stallion. An angry and brutish-looking man has been tightly bound and forced to march behind the horse, his hands tied with a length of rope fastened to the saddle horn. His tongue lolls out of his mouth and his eyes are blindfolded. The procession quickly draws the entire town as the two head directly toward Samuul's home.

The half-orc on horseback is actually Khalogo, the leader of the three jackalwere mercenaries. He has used his alternate form ability to assume Charnos's appearance, but wears the helm to prevent his sleep gaze from affecting any of the villagers until he is ready to strike. The man in tow is another of the jackalweres—Mahlmet. The ropes that bind him are in fact clever slip knots—Mahlmet can automatically shrug out of the ropes with a move action. A character who inspects the ropes and makes a DC 15 Use Rope check realizes the bindings are rigged in this fashion. Khalogo has cast *invisibility* on their third member (the druid Ahln-Veer), who moves stealthily alongside the two with a prepared action to remove Mahlmet's blindfold when the time to strike comes. One of Samuul's bodyguards trots ahead of them, calling out to Samuul, "Charnos has returned!"

Samuul welcomes Charnos back, and the disguised jackalwere just grunts in reply before saying, "I've some disturbing news to report to you, Samuul. And Jazeela should hear as well. Shall we retire to the tent?" Samuul readily agrees and leads the "half-orc" and his prisoner into the tent at once, calling for one of his bodyguards to bring Jazeela immediately. If the PCs show any interest and they've not estranged themselves from Samuul yet, he invites them in as well, explaining to "Charnos" that "These good folk should hear what you have to say, for I believe they might be able to help the

situation." The disguised jackalwere reluctantly agrees.

As the PCs interact with the disguised jackalweres, they should get Spot checks to see through their disguises. You should roll these Spot checks in secret, opposed by the two visible jackalweres' Disguise checks, to determine if one of the PCs notices something strange about the two. You can also roll Listen checks opposed by Ahln-Veer's Move Silently skill to determine if the PCs hear the invisible jackalwere rustling about.

If the PCs don't intervene, "Charnos" gives Samuul the following brief report.

> "I have dealt the slavers an incredible blow by capturing one of their leaders—this doubtful lout here. Along with him, I have recovered a strange-looking runestone from their encampment. I'm not sure what the runestone signifies, but the slavers were quite eager to try to keep it from me. It's obviously important to them. I thought that perhaps Jazeela could decipher its meaning?"

At this point he pulls a small wooden chest from his saddle bag and sets it on the table, indicating that the runestone is inside. Of course, the entire story is a lie, and any PC who shows suspicion may make a Sense Motive check against Khalogo's Bluff to notice the lie. In fact, the chest contains Charnos's severed head. Further, the chest has been *fire trapped*, courtesy of Ahln-Veer.

Creatures: Khalogo is quite brilliant, charming, and evil to the core. He enjoys tormenting his victims with physical torture before feasting on them. His fur is brighter orange and deeper black than that of most jackalweres, and he keeps his teeth white and his breath less fetid than his companions by chewing on roots and leather.

Mahlmet was once enslaved by a group of human mercenaries, and for that reason, he truly enjoys paying back with treatment in kind. He respects Khalogo above all and he fears Ahln-Veer's command of nature. Mahlmet is a towering, dark furred, heavily muscled creature in all his forms. His back and upper arms are terribly scarred from the lashings he endured during his time of servitude.

Ahln-Veer sees himself as a champion of the desert. The nomadic folk have long abused his lands by hunting them and building towns and buildings within their reach, and he takes pride and pleasure in ruining these infidels. He sees Khalogo as an incredibly useful ally, but isn't overly fond of Mahlmet's simpering attitude.

The black stallion Khalogo rides is in fact Charnos's steed, tricked into obedience by wild empathy.

Khalogo, male jackalwere sorcerer 4 (hybrid form): CR 4; Medium magical beast (shapechanger); HD 4d8+8 plus 4d4+8; hp 44; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +12 melee (1d4+2/19–20, *+1 silver dagger*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d4+2/19–20, *+1 silver dagger*) and +6 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA sleep gaze, spells; SQ alternate form,

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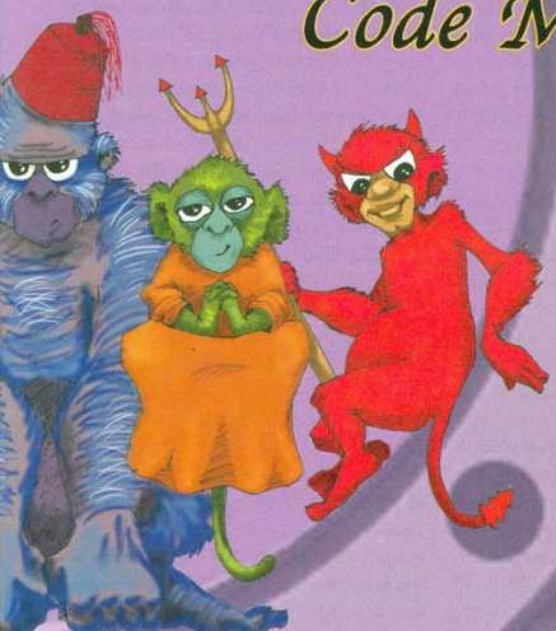

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damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 18; *Fiend Folio* 107.

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +12 (+14 acting), Intimidate +6, Sense Motive +7.

Feats: Ability Focus (sleep gaze), Alertness (as long as Pothash is in arm's reach), Combat Casting, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Thri-kreen.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/4; caster level 4): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 14), *message, open/close*; 1st—*endure elements, magic missile, Tenser's floating disc*; 2nd—*invisibility*.

Sleep Gaze (Su): Sleep for 5 minutes, 30 feet, Will save (DC 18) negates. Creatures engaged in combat receive a +4 bonus on their saving throws against this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Alternate Form (Su): Khalogo has three forms: that of a jackal, that of a human, and that of a human/jackal hybrid. He can switch between forms as a standard action as if using *polymorph*. He prefers to fight in hybrid form.

In human form, his AC becomes 15 (touch 15, flat-footed 10), and he loses his bite secondary attack.

In jackal form, he is Small, his speed becomes 40 feet, his AC becomes 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 14), and his equipment merges with his body (he retains only his bite attack, but gains a +1 bonus on this attack due to his Small size).

Possessions: *+1 silver dagger, wand of burning hands* (caster level 3rd, 38 charges), silk robes and sashes, obsidian shard necklace (30 gp value), camel hair belt pouch containing 20 gp and a small obsidian sphere worth 10 gp.

Pothash, tiny viper familiar: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 280.

Mahlmet, male jackalwere ranger 2 (hybrid form): CR 4; Medium magical beast (shapechanger); HD 6d8+24; hp 51; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee (1d6+4/18–20, *+1 scimitar*); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+4/18–20, *+1 scimitar*) and +9 melee (1d4+1/18–20, masterwork kukri) and +4 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA favored enemy (humans) +2, sleep gaze, two-weapon fighting combat style; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, wild empathy +2; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10; *Fiend Folio* 107.

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Intimidate +2, Listen +11, Spot +11, Survival +6.

Feats: Dodge, Track[B], Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (kukri), Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Sleep Gaze (Su): Sleep for 5 minutes, 30 feet, Will save (DC 12) negates. Creatures engaged in combat receive a +4 bonus on their saving throws against this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Alternate Form (Su): Mahlmet has three forms: that of a jackal, that of a human, and that of a human/jackal hybrid. He can switch between forms as a standard action as if though using *polymorph*. He prefers to fight in hybrid form.

In human form, his AC becomes 18 (touch 14, flat-footed 14), and he loses his bite secondary attack.

In jackal form, he is Small, his speed becomes 40 feet, his AC becomes 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 14), and his equipment merges with his body (he retains only his bite attack, but gains a +1 bonus on this attack due to his Small size).

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 scimitar, masterwork kukri, black-dyed camel hair cloak with lion mane trim (100 gp value), two 30 gp garnets and a leather pouch with 40 gp and a small obsidian sphere worth 10 gp.

Ahln-Veer, male jackalwere druid 4 (hybrid form): CR 4; Medium magical beast (shapechanger); HD 8d8+32; hp 74; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d6+3, masterwork quarterstaff); Full Atk +10 melee (1d6+3, masterwork quarterstaff) and +4 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA sleep gaze, spells; SQ alternate form, animal companion, damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, nature sense, resist nature's lure, wild empathy +6, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 15; *Fiend Folio* 107.

Skills: Concentration +8, Handle Animal +2, Listen +11, Move Silently +12, Survival +8.

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Languages: Common, Druidic.

Druid Spells Prepared (caster level 4): 0—*create water, detect magic, resistance* (2), *virtue*; 1st—*cure light wounds, hide from animals, pass without trace, produce flame* (+9 touch); 2nd—*sunstroke* (2) (DC 16), *warp wood* (DC 16).

Sleep Gaze (Su): Sleep for 5 minutes, 30 feet, Will save (DC 14) negates. Creatures engaged in combat receive a +4 bonus on their saving throws against this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Alternate Form (Su): Ahln-Veer has three forms: that of a jackal, that of a human, and that of a human/jackal hybrid. He can switch between forms as a standard action as if though using *polymorph*. He prefers to fight in hybrid form.

In human form, his AC becomes 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12), and he loses his bite secondary attack.

In jackal form, he is Small, his speed becomes 40 feet, his AC becomes 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 14), and his equipment merges with his body (he retains only his bite attack, but gains a +1 bonus on this attack due to his Small size).

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork quarterstaff, *boots of elvenkind*, *wand of cure light wounds* (32 charges) and a pouch containing a small obsidian sphere worth 10 gp.

Rix, dire bat animal companion; hp 30, *Monster Manual* 62.

Charnos' Black Stallion, heavy warhorse: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 273.

Tactics: If their ruse goes undiscovered, Khalogo hands the *fire-trapped* chest to Samuul and backs away. As the overseer opens it he catches a glimpse of Charnos' head before the *fire trap* is triggered, dealing 1d4+4 points of fire damage (DC 16 Reflex save halves) to Samuul and anyone in a 5-foot-radius burst. Samuul must also make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid having his silks, hair oil, and powder catch on fire. The trap affects two of Samuul's sworn swords as well.

Once the *fire trap* is triggered, or once the PCs see through the deception, the three jackalweres strike, according to the round-by-round breakdown below.

Surprise Round: Khalogo removes his helmet (enabling his sleep gaze attack) and Mahlmet assumes hybrid form. Ahln-Veer removes Mahlmet's blindfold. Everyone within 30 feet must save against the effects of Khalogo and Mahlmet's sleep gaze attacks (remember, Jazeela and other elves are immune to sleep effects)—the two jackalweres direct their gaze weapons at Samuul and one of the PCs as well, forcing them to make additional saves.

Round 1: Khalogo and Mahlmet use their gaze weapons and take standard actions to assume hybrid form, moving up to within melee reach of Jazeela. Ahln-Veer (already in hybrid form, but invisible) casts *sunstroke* on Jazeela, becoming visible as a result. Everyone must make Will saves against all three jackalwere gaze weapons now; the jackalweres focus their gaze weapons on the toughest-looking PCs or NPCs. If Samuul is still awake, he tries to flee; any of his sworn swords who are still awake attack the jackalweres. Jazeela tries to cast *mage armor*, but in her panic forgets to cast defensively and provokes attacks of opportunity from any jackalweres in reach. These jackalweres use nonlethal force (taking a –4 penalty on their attack rolls) against Jazeela.

Round 2: Khalogo and Mahlmet continue to run interference to keep anyone from helping Jazeela, and also try to prevent her from escaping. Ahln-Veer casts his second *sunstroke* spell on Jazeela. Any

SUNSTROKE

Transmutation
Level: Druid 2, sorcerer/wizard 3, Summer 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. +10 ft./level)
Target: One living creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

You cause the targeted creature to suffer as if it had been toiling for hours on end under the merciless hammer of the desert sun. If the target fails to resist the spell, it immediately becomes fatigued. If the target is already fatigued, it instead becomes exhausted. The target takes 2d6 points of nonlethal damage from the oppressive heat as well, even if it makes the Fortitude saving throw to avoid fatigue or exhaustion.

This spell does not cause true heat stroke, and its effects cannot be treated in the normal way, although magical healing removes the nonlethal damage normally.

This spell originally appeared in *Sandstorm*.

DESERT ENCOUNTERS

d%	Encounter	Average EL	Source
01-10	1d8 dire jackals	6	See page 31
11-20	1d4 Large monstrous scorpions	5	*Monster Manual* 287
21-30	1d4 dire bats	4	*Monster Manual* 62
31-50	1d6 Medium monstrous scorpions	3	*Monster Manual* 287
51-60	1 Huge rattlesnake	3	*Monster Manual* 280 (huge viper)
61-80	1d6 hyenas	3	*Monster Manual* 274
81-100	1d6 Small monstrous scorpions	2	*Monster Manual* 287

sworn swords who still stand continue to fight the jackalweres.

Additional rounds: The jackalweres' primary goal isn't to kill people, but to capture Jazeela alive (but unconscious). If the two *sunstroke* spells don't knock her out, the three use nonlethal attacks against her until she falls unconscious. If they knock out any PCs, the jackalweres ignore them for the rest of the fight.

Once Jazeela is out, Khalogo casts *Tenser's floating disc* and loads her unconscious body onto it. The three jackalweres leave the tent, and Ahln-Veer casts *warp wood* on the central stake of the tent, causing it to collapse on the unconscious or sleeping guards and PCs within. A PC who tries to escape the collapsed tent moves at half-normal speed and moves in a random direction every round.

Once outside, the jackalweres assume jackal form and flee to the south with the floating disc in tow; their speed of 40 feet is enough for them to reach the edge of the oasis relatively quickly, at which point they meet up with Ahln-Veer's animal companion, a dire bat named Rix. They load the unconscious elf onto the dire bat, and then Ahln-Veer flees into the desert while the other two jackalweres make their way back to the monolith.

Development: If the jackalweres manage to kidnap Jazeela, they bring her to Harbinger at the Black Monolith. The PCs may have a chance to rescue her later, even if they don't know where to begin looking for her unless they can track the jackalweres.

If, on the other hand, the PCs defeat the jackalweres, Samuul and Jazeela thank the party heartily. Jazeela offers to identify any of the jackalweres' magic items for free for the party. An investigation of the dead jackalweres should reveal the obsidian spheres they carry—sure indication that they were working for the Order of the Obsidian Eye.

In any case, the adventure now moves into the desert sands as the PCs seek out the Black Monolith, following Jazeela's map to its location.

Chapter Two: Into the Sands

No map of the desert region between Kashral and the Black Obelisk is provided, allowing you to easily adapt this adventure to your own campaign world. The journey should be across sandy dunes and grueling temperatures—the PCs should be menaced by the environment as much as (or more) than by the monstrous denizens.

Using Jazeela's map, it's only a DC 6 Survival check to stay on course to the Black Obelisk. It's about 50 miles to the Black Obelisk from Kashral, through a trackless desert. A party of characters moving at a speed of 30 feet can make it to the obelisk in four days as a result. Each failure to stay on course with a DC 6 Survival check increases the number of days it takes to reach the destination by one. Check for encounters with wandering monsters four times a day; once at dawn, once at noon, once at dusk, and once at midnight—there's a 10% chance of an encounter. If an encounter occurs, roll on the following table to determine what the PCs stumble across. Alternately, if you have *Sandstorm*, you can generate encounters using the tables in the back of that book, rolling on the EL 3 encounter list.

Of course, heat and thirst are also very real dangers that face the PCs during their desert trek. Rules for handling these factors are covered in detail on pages 303–304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you're looking for more in depth rules on desert dangers, consult *Sandstorm*.

Walkers on the Dunes (EL 5)

Run this event at any point during the PCs' journey through the desert to the Black Obelisk.

When Anuk IX destroyed his empire, not all of his once loyal servants were slain. Those who survived the initial devastation found themselves adrift in a trackless desert—most of these people perished from exposure or thirst over the next few days, and their bodies were quickly swallowed by the sands. Yet such was their wrath that their bodies did not rot away. Instead, many of them transformed into undead menaces called ashen husks. For hundreds of years, these undead lay dormant under the sands, but now that the Order of the Obsidian Eye is tampering with the Black Obelisk, their need for revenge has awakened them. Throughout the desert, the scattered ashen hulks claw their way to the surface and begin a slow, stumbling advance on the ancient ruin, intent to wreak their vengeance upon the servants of the source of their torment.

Creatures: If you run this encounter while the PCs are on the move, the two ashen husks claw their way out of the sands only a few dozen feet in front of the PCs. If the encounter occurs while the PCs are at rest, the ashen husks are already on the way, and they stumble directly into the middle of the PCs' camp. Although they thirst for vengeance against the minions of Anuk IX, they are mindless creatures. To them, all living creatures are enemies.

Ashen husks appear as animated, bone-dry corpses. The air around their skeletal frames wavers with a dry, sucking heat, as if the corpse brings with it the soul of the waterless desert. They stand over 6 feet tall, but their desiccated bodies weigh only 140 pounds.

Ashen husk (2): CR 3; Medium undead; HD 2d12+4 plus 3; hp 20 each; Init –1; Spd 30 ft. (can't run); AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +5; Atk

or Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+6, slam); SA dehydrating aura; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, unholy toughness, create spawn; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 15; *Sandstorm*.

Feats: Toughness[B].

Dehydrating Aura (Su): An ashen husk has a 10-foot-radius aura of dryness. All living creatures within 10 feet become dehydrated, becoming fatigued immediately. Each round a creature remains in this area, it must make a DC 10 Constitution check to resist taking 1d6 points of damage from dehydration. Each round, the DC of this check increases by 1.

Create Spawn (Su): A creature killed by an ashen husk's dehydrating aura rises after 1d4 days as a free-willed ashen husk.

Unholy Toughness (Su): The ashen husk gains a bonus to its hit points equal to its Charisma modifier times its Hit Dice.

Development: As the adventure progresses, feel free to include additional encounters with ashen husks. You can use encounters with these undead as a way to liven up a dull stretch of play. Alternately, if things are going poorly for the PCs in Chapter Three, the arrival of a large number of ashen husks in the region might draw off some of the Order's resources, forcing them to split their defenses between the PCs and the undead menace.

Chapter Three: Battle for the Eye

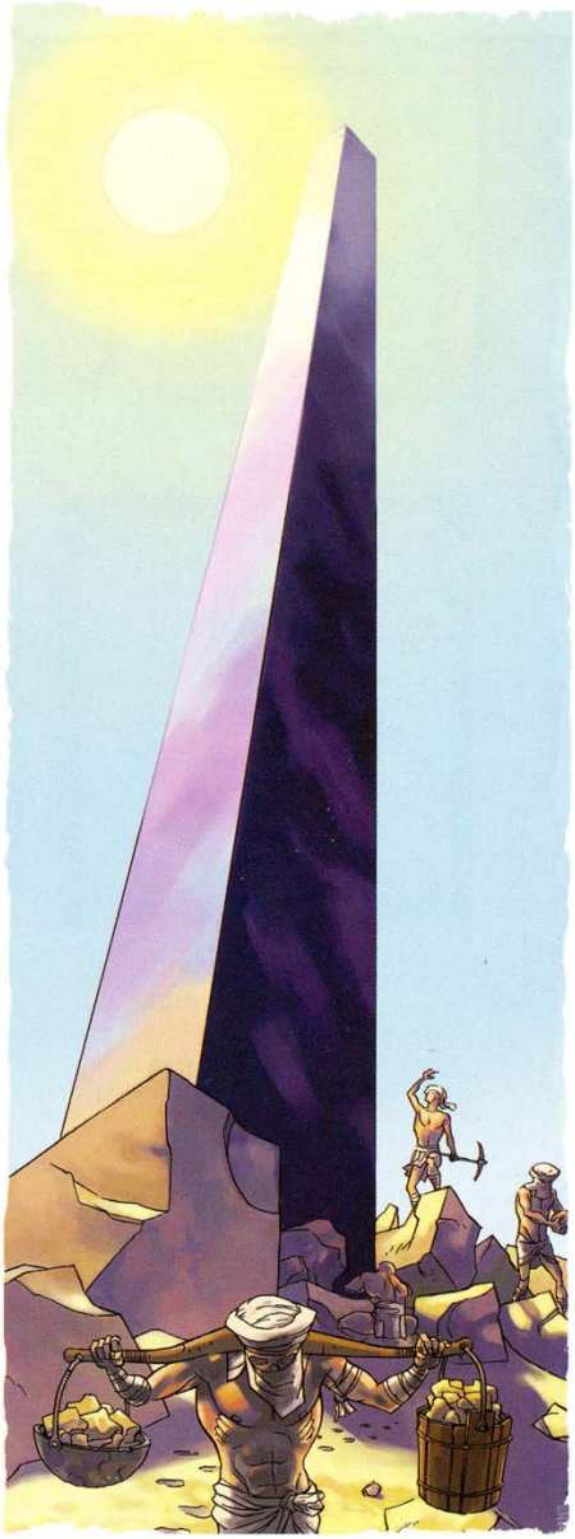
A massive dark obelisk looms ahead, a colossal black blade cleaving through the wastelands. At its base, a sandstone mesa has been freshly split, pierced by the dark obsidian tower as if it rose from below. Ancient patterns and etchings glitter on the obelisk's face; the carvings shimmer and dance as if alive. A chorus of hammers and picks resonates from the base of the obelisk, as if the dark tower were wailing a dirge for the fleeing daylight.

When the PCs reach the Black Obelisk, they'll have the freedom to tackle an approach from any direction. The monks of the Obsidian Eye have little reason to suspect anyone is coming to meddle with their affairs, and don't bother maintaining lookouts. They rely heavily upon the three jackalwere mercenaries for their protection; if the PCs defeated these three villains earlier in the adventure, they'll find the task of getting through the encampment and into the obelisk itself a fairly simple prospect.

The hewn stone that makes up the Black Obelisk has been magically treated (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 59), and has hardness 16 and 180 hp per 10-foot-by-10-foot section as a result.

O1. The Slave Camp (EL 8)

In the obelisk's shadow, a deep trench runs around the monolith's base. Piles of rubble and sand dot the area. Nearly a



02. Arboretum

03. Upper Arboretum

04. Solarium

06. Keeper's Chamber
07. Inner Sanctum

05. Fountain Chamber

01. Black Obelisk Environs

Note: Circled numbers indicate Monk starting positions

hundred feet to the west gapes a large pit, a small stone platform at its center and a large wooden plank with several heavy ropes tied around providing a walkway onto the top of the platform. A crude shelter of ratty camel hides provides some shade on the platform, which is strewn with buckets and blankets.

Creatures: The bulk of the Order of the Obsidian Eye consists of the ten monks who oversee the excavation here. They hope to uncover a still buried entrance into the monolith somewhere below, while at the same time their leaders inside the monolith look for a way to penetrate the lower levels from within. During the night, the monks are positioned at the locations indicated by numbers on the map, each carrying a single torch, while their twelve slaves toil away in the trench surrounding the obelisk. During the blistering heat of the day, the twelve monks retreat into area **O2** to rest, although two of them are always on guard at the entrance, watching for trouble and keeping an eye on the slaves to the west. The platform surrounded by the trench to the west is where the slaves sleep during the day, at which time the makeshift wooden bridge is withdrawn. The dry moat surrounding the platform is 20 feet deep and populated by four dire jackals. The monks feed and water the jackals sporadically, just enough to keep them healthy and angry—so far, none of the slaves has been brave enough to try escaping by jumping over the pit to safety. The jackals can just reach the edge of the platform if they roll well on a Jump check, so the slaves avoid getting too close to the edges. The monks have treated the slaves fairly well, feeding them regularly and allowing them to work at night to avoid heat stroke. As a result, the slaves (who were all chosen for their physical strength) are in fairly good shape, and are willing to join in a battle against the monks if given the chance.

Acolytes of the Obsidian Eye, male and female human monk 1 (10): CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 10 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk +0 melee (1d6, unarmed strike) or +2 ranged (1d2, shuriken); Full Atk –2/–2 melee (1d6, unarmed strike with flurry of blows) or +2 ranged (1d2, shuriken); SA flurry of blows, unarmed strike; SQ —; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +6, Jump +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Tumble +6.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Stunning Fist (1/day, DC 11)[B].

Languages: Common, Terran.

Possessions: Shuriken (5), black loincloths, sandals, obsidian sphere worth 10 gp.

Slaves, male and female human warrior 1 (12): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 10 each; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk –1 melee (1d6+3, digging tool wielded two-handed); SA —; SQ —; AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +6, Ride +5.

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Digging tool (can be used as an improvised weapon).

Dire jackals (4): CR 2; Large animal; HD 4d8+8; hp 26 each; Init +2; Spd 60 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, bite); SA trip; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8; *Sandstorm*.

Skills: Jump +22, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +3 (+7 when tracking by scent).

Feats: Alertness, Track.

Trip (Ex): A dire jackal that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the dire jackal.

Tactics: As with the earlier fight against the three jackalweres, this battle can quickly go against the PCs if they aren't careful. The sheer number of monks means that a group of four PCs can be easily overwhelmed. In addition, as the battle rages, chances are good that the monks are reinforced by allies from within the obelisk.

Yet the PCs may have the element of surprise; during the day, there are few guards and it's relatively easy to sneak up to the site undetected (the only guards stand in the doorway to area **O2**, which offers a limited view to the west). And at night, while there are more guards, the PCs have the benefit of darkness to conceal their approach. Stealth offers a better chance at success here; if they can pick off the monks quickly and silently, one at a time, they won't have to face as many if the alarm is ever raised.

The slaves represent an additional resource. The monks have kept them in fairly healthy condition, but the use of the dire jackals and their leaders' fearsome appearance has kept the humans cowed until now. If the slaves see the PCs launch an attack, though, they quickly throw off their fears and join the fray, using shovels and picks against the monks in a sudden uprising.

Even the dire jackals can be a resource to canny PCs. A druid with *charm animal* or a good wild empathy check might be able to calm the creatures or even recruit their aid. Without assistance, a jackal needs to roll an DC 40 Jump check to escape the pit unless the "bridge" is turned into a ramp for them.

Once the monks are aware of the PCs' presence, they immediately raise an alarm by shrieking out piercing ululations. They then work together to repulse or defeat the PCs, trying to flank enemies or bull rush them into the jackal pit. The monks are well-trained and loyal, and do not retreat.

If a large battle with the PCs lasts for more than 6 rounds, any of the surviving jackalweres in area **O3** come to join the battle as well. The two leaders of the monks (Harbinger and his consort Mio) do not join the battle, but if it lasts for more than five rounds, they do come to observe the remainder of fight, retreating back to area **O6** if the PCs are victorious.

If the PCs retreat into the desert, the monks do not give chase. They do increase their patrols for the next few days, though, making it difficult to sneak back onto the site.

Development: If the monks are defeated, the slaves throw up a terrific cheer. They readily agree to accompany the PCs into the Obelisk to finish off the leaders, and can tell the PCs about Mio and Harbinger's strengths in combat as well as about the thri-kreen. If the jackalweres returned with Jazeela, the slaves can tell the PCs that they saw the elf woman brought into the monolith but have not seen her emerge.

O2. The Arboretum (EL 4 or 8)

The entryway into the obelisk is 20 feet above the rocks below, making it difficult to reach. The PCs must either Climb up (DC 20) or find some other means of gaining access. The monks have attached ropes and throw them down when they need to climb into or out of the entrance; climbing with a rope is only a DC 5 Climb check.

The sound of rushing water and the fragrant scent of flowers fills this tall chamber. A geyser-like fountain adorned with obsidian serpents sprays a column of water into the air. This fountain of water once passed through a hole in the ceiling, but the earthquake seems to have shifted things. Now the water sprays against the obsidian ceiling and rains back down into the room, spraying the central area of the room with a rain-like deluge that drains away back into the central fountain. The remainder of the room is decorated with several raised banks of plant life. Desert roses, rows of orchids, water lilies, lotus plants and myriad others line these embankments. The ceiling glows with a soothing warm light that feels almost like sunlight. Several crude cots line the walls of the room.

Anuk IX created this room to serve as an arboretum for his enjoyment. The ceiling creates sunlight for the plants, and the fountain functions in a manner similar to a *decanter of endless water*, providing constant water for them. Now, the water serves as a source of drinking water for the monks and their slaves.

Creatures: During the day, the ten monks that serve Harbinger dwell within this chamber. They spend their time sleeping, meditating, and talking quietly. In addition, three thri-kreen mercenaries dwell here as well. These mantis-like four-armed humanoids were hired by Harbinger when he found them exploring the Black Obelisk when the monks first arrived. Always on the hunt for profit, the thri-kreen have agreed to serve as guards for this room but have little interest in aiding the monks in the defense of area **O2** until Harbinger agrees to pay them more. If the PCs confront the thri-kreen here after they've defeated the monks elsewhere, the thri-kreen don't make the first move unless the PCs try to explore further. Their initial attitude is only unfriendly, and with a DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidate check (and bribes of at least 100 gp per thri-kreen), the insectoid mercenaries agree to switch sides and help the PCs explore the obelisk and fight against the remaining monks and their leaders.

Chilek, Kalarat, and Siskas, male thri-kreen fighter 1 (3): CR 2; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 1d10+1; hp 25 each; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d10+4, gythka); Full Atk +5 melee (1d10+3, gythka) and +5 melee (1d10+1, gythka) and +4 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA poison, psi-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to sleep effects, leap; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8; *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 213.

Skills: Jump +41, Hide +4 (+8 in sandy or arid settings).

Feats: Deflect Arrows[B], Multiattack, Multiweapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (gythka)[B].

Languages: Common, Thri-Kreen.

Psi-like Abilities (manifester level 2): 3/day—*chameleon, know direction and location*; 1/day—*greater concealing amorpha, metaphysical claw*.

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork gythka (both ends masterwork), pouch of 50 gp and an obsidian sphere worth 10 gp (pay from Harbinger).

THRI-KREEN

The thri-kreen encountered in this adventure feature two unique factors: they use special weapons called gythkas, and they have psi-like powers. If you don't have access to the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, use the following rules for handling these aspects.

Gythka: A gythka is a two-handed exotic melee weapon favored by the thri-kreen (who treat it as a martial weapon). This polearm has a blade at both ends—you can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons, just as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. A gythka costs 60 gp, deals 1d10 damage on a hit, and has a critical multiplier of ×2. It weights 25 lb. and deals slashing damage.

Psi-Like Abilities: Replace with the following spell-like abilities: 3/day—*hide from animals, pass without trace*; 1/day—*displacement, greater magic fang*.

O3. Upper Arboretum (EL 0 or 7)

The floor of this room is criss-crossed with narrow sluiceways, now dry and filled with dust. Large planters of dusty soil and long-withered plants dominate the room. A hole in the center of the room opens into the chamber below, from which the sound of rushing water can be heard. The northwest corner of the room contains three large nests of sand and fur, each cluttered with split bones and bits of flesh.

This chamber was once an upper tier to the arboretum in area **O2**. The fountain in the lower room once watered the exotic plants here, but during the cataclysm the fountain below was damaged and this room slowly fell to ruin over the years.

Creatures: The nests in this room are used by the three jackalweres the Order of the Obsidian Eye retains. If they were slain at the start of the adventure, this room is empty. If, on the other hand, the jackalweres escaped (likely with a captive elf in tow), those who survive lurk here in jackal form. If they hear combat outside, they eventually clamber downstairs to investigate, but they'd rather let the monks outside take care of things.

Khalogo, male jackalwere sorcerer 4: hp 44; see page 25.

Mahlmet, male jackalwere ranger 2: hp 51; see page 26.

Ahln-Veer, male jackalwere druid 4: hp 74; see page 27.

Treasure: Although the plants here are long dead, a successful Search of the dry beds uncovers 12 intact seeds from ancient and extinct flowers. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that these seeds are still viable, protected from decay by residual magic in the room. Seeds of rare orchids, desert night bloomers, and extinct Anuk's tear blossoms are among those that can be recovered. To anyone who deals in rare plants, these seeds are incredibly valuable. Ten of the other seeds are worth 200 gp each; the last two are viable Anuk's tear blossoms and are worth 1,000 gp each.

O4. Solarium (EL 5)

This chamber is shocking in its majesty—it obviously sits within the domed apex of the monolith, but more impressive, the walls appear to be completely open to the elements, with four pillars in each corner of the room supporting a peaked dome above. Yet despite the open walls, the room is strangely calm and shielded from wind. The floor of the central portion of the room depicts an amazing scale model of an ancient city. Diminutive towers and rows of tiny brick buildings surround several larger pyramids. At the very center of the model is a miniature black obelisk.

The walls of this room are enhanced with an ancient spell known to scholars as *glassee*, an incantation that grants opaque material the transparency of glass when viewed from certain angles. From the outside, these *glassee* windows look like stone, but from within they allow a commanding view of the surrounding region. The city model on the floor once allowed a person to scry upon any of the locations surrounding the obelisk, but as the surrounding city was destroyed by the ancient apocalypse, the model lost this magical quality.

Creature: A tall dark-skinned man clothed in black robes stands near the map, a colossus amongst the buildings. From an opening in his robes near the right side of his abdomen a thick leathery appendage emerges, snaking outward to wrap around one of the pyramids, the barbed tip resting at the pyramid's apex. This is the leader of the Order of the Obsidian Eye—Harbinger. If the monks raised the alarm when the PCs attacked earlier, Harbinger observed them through the windows in this room, noting their strengths and weaknesses in battle. He makes use of this knowledge if the PCs confront him here.

Harbinger knows nothing of his real family, or of the nameless fiend that gave him his tentacular "gift." He was left in the care of the Order of the Obsidian Eye as a small baby, the tentacle already grafted to his body and thrashing wildly along to his infant cries. He has studied the Abyssal and Infernal languages in hopes of someday meeting his patron. In the meantime, he remains fanatical about his mission for the Order. He believes his coming to the monastery was preordained and is confident he shall be

the one to awaken Anuk IX from his dark slumber. Harbinger looks forward to sitting at the mad king's side in the Hall of Ancients deep within the ruins of Anuk-Saal.

Harbinger, male human monk 5: CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 6d8+18; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +8 (+14 with grappling tentacle; Atk +8 melee (1d6+4, grappling tentacle); Full Atk +5/+5 melee (1d8+2, unarmed strike) and +3 melee (1d6+4, grappling tentacle); SA flurry of blows, ki strike (magic), unarmed strike; SQ evasion, purity of body, slow fall 20 ft., still mind; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 12 (16 with grasping tentacle), Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Balance +4, Climb +7, Jump +15, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +7, Spot +7, Tumble +8.

Feats: Deflect Arrows[B], Die Hard, Endurance, Improved Grapple[B], Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Grappling Tentacle: This fiendish graft allows Harbinger to make an additional attack for a base of 1d6 damage each round. The tentacle gains a +4 bonus to Strength, and an additional +4 bonus on grapple checks (except to grapple checks made to escape a grapple).

Possessions: *Robe of armor +2* (as *bracers of armor +2*), grappling tentacle graft, *amulet of mighty fists +1*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of displacement*.

Tactics: Harbinger focuses all his attacks on a single target, bringing all his wrath to bear on the victim before moving to a new target. If brought below 20 hit points, he flees down to area **O5** to recruit Mio's aid, using Tumble checks and his slow fall ability as necessary.

Treasure: Several of the scale-model buildings in this room remain in good condition—eight of them are worth 200 gp to a collector.

Development: If the jackalweres abducted Jazeela, she's kept here, her legs bound with rope. Harbinger has been doing his best to get her to aid his translation of the runes from area **O6**, and has set up a crude table for her here. She doesn't have her spellbook, and is too terrified to make any attempt to escape until the PCs arrive, at which point she'll do her best to support them in their effort to recover the *Obsidian Eye*.

O5. Fountain Chamber (EL 5)

The oppressive desert heat wanes in this room—a large open chamber supported by tall, intricately carved pillars affixed to the walls by bronze bars 15 feet above the floor. A strange structure looms in the center of the room—a pyramid-shaped fountain that spills water down its sloped surfaces to drain into grooves that run along the fountain's perimeter. Where the tip of the pyramid should be is a large basin carved into the stone from which a turbulent braid of water erupts, traveling up into an opening in the center of the ceiling. Eight great pillars hold the ceiling above. The unadorned stone that makes up the rest of the chamber's walls and floor is cool to the touch and weeps with condensation.

This strange fountain and its braid of water are the power source of the eternal water fountain in area **O3** above. Many of ancient Anuk-Saal's government buildings had fountains similar to this one, but now, this may be the only one left.

Creature: The last of the monks of the Obsidian Eye waits here, guarding the entrance to the inner sanctum below. This is Mio the Scorpion, perhaps the most deadly and dangerous monk in this particular chapter of the Order. If she desired it, she could have stolen leadership from Harbinger many months ago, but she loathes the responsibilities that come with leadership and is content to let Harbinger continue in his capacity as leader for now. If she knows the PCs are near, she hides on a small ledge above the stairs descending into this chamber.

Mio is as strikingly beautiful as she is deadly. Her copper skin holds the sharp features of her body well, rippling with well-formed muscle. Her piercing brown eyes drink in every detail all while warning that this feminine beauty can sting. This "sting" is a barbed blade braided into her thick shock of cobalt hair. Her whipping hair and flashing kama leave no room for doubt of her graceful path as a monk, but her synchronized insect-like movements give off an almost alien feeling. Once a nomad, her tribe is now extinct; slaughtered by rampaging orcs. She was taken in by Harbinger and trained in the fighting arts, but retains a deep hatred of orcs—any half-orc characters amongst the PCs receive the brunt of her rage during combat as a result.

Mio the Scorpion, female human monk 2/fighter 4: CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8 plus 4d10; hp 34; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d6+4, masterwork kama) or +11 ranged (1d2+2 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); Full Atk +10/+10 melee (1d6+4, masterwork kamas with flurry of blows) and +9 melee (1d3+1 plus poison, masterwork braid blade) or +11 ranged (1d2+2 plus poison, masterwork shuriken); SA flurry of blows, unarmed strike; SQ evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +10, Hide +10, Jump +19, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Tumble +12.

Feats: Acrobatic, Combat Expertise, Deflect Arrows[B], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (braid blade), Improved Grapple[B], Improved Unarmed Strike[B], Scorpion's Grasp, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (kama)[B], Weapon Specialization (kama)[B].

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Possessions: Two masterwork kamas, masterwork braid blade (poisoned with Large scorpion venom, Fort DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str), five masterwork shurikens shaped like scarabs and ankhs (all poisoned with Large scorpion venom, Fort DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str) in a black leather bandolier, *gloves of Dexterity +2*, *boots of striding and springing*, black silken shirt and pants with gold

embroidered scorpions worth 250 gp, 3 vials of Large scorpion venom.

Tactics: If one of the PCs is Small, Mio attacks that character from her hiding spot above the stairs as the Small character moves by. If she hits, she tries to grab him with her Scorpion's Grasp feat (taking the –20 penalty on the Grapple check to retain her mobility). If she's successful, she pulls him up to the ledge to hold him immobile and uses her other attacks to prevent others from trying to save him. Once combat begins, she uses her mobility and speed to Tumble through the party, trying to poison as many as possible with her braid blade and shurikens before closing to melee. Mio uses the room to the best of her advantage, using the geyser of water and pillars as cover or concealment and forcing the PCs to remain on the move. She uses the bars between the pillars and walls as a place to retreat from melee, using Jump to reach them. She focuses the majority of her initial attacks on spellcasters and characters with ranged weapons.

Mio

EXOTIC WEAPON– BRAID BLADE

A braid blade is a small dagger-like blade that can be woven into the end of a long braid of hair. While a braid blade doesn't inflict much damage, it grants those proficient in its use an additional attack that, when combined with sneak attacks, poison, or similar augmentations can become quite deadly.

You can attack with a braid blade as a regular weapon, leaving both hands free for other pursuits. When you make a full-attack action, you may make one additional attack with your braid blade, although you suffer a –5 penalty on the attack roll unless you also have at least 5 ranks in Tumble, in which case the penalty is reduced to –2.

A braid blade grants a +2 circumstance bonus on any Bluff checks made to feint an opponent in combat.

Braid Blade (Light Exotic Weapon): Cost 10 gp; Dmg (S) 1d2; Dmg (M) 1d3; Critical 18–20/×2; Weight 1/2 lb.; Type Slashing.

SCORPION'S GRASP

Like the scorpion, you can grab and hold your prey.

Prerequisite: Str 13, Dex 13, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike.

Benefit: If your attack with a light or one-handed weapon hits, the weapon deals normal damage and you can attempt to start a grapple as a free action; no initial touch attack is required. You gain your Improved grapple bonus as normal. If you succeed in starting the grapple, you must drop your one-handed weapon, but if you started the grapple with a light weapon, you can use it each round to make an attack against the creature you are grappling without suffering a –4 penalty on the attack (as you normally would).

You have the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply hold the opponent if it is at least one size smaller than you. If you choose the latter, you take a –20 penalty on grapple checks, but are not considered grappled yourself; you do not lose your Dexterity bonus to AC, still threaten an area, and can use your off hand for attacks against other opponents, if you have an off-hand attack.

A successful hold does not deal any extra damage.

When you begin a grapple with this feat, you pull your opponent into your space. This does not provoke attacks of opportunity. You can even move (possibly carrying away your opponent), provided you can drag the opponent's weight.

O6. The Keeper's Chamber (EL 4)

A grizzled scene of carnage fills the small stone room. Eerie shadows play about the remains of several broken bodies strewn on the floor. Tendrils of smoke and steam linger in the chamber, and the smell of boiled blood is thick. The sandy floor is caked with red, and the walls are spattered with gore. A large twisted pile of copper and iron lies in the middle of the room, a tangled mess that vaguely resembles a humanoid. The only thing not befouled in the room is a stone door to the southeast, its disturbingly clean surface etched with a tangled web of intricate runes and markings.

Although the carnage in this room might give the PCs pause, much of the danger within has already passed. Originally, a dangerous construct similar to a nimblewright (*Monster Manual II* 163) guarded this chamber. It took several slaves and monks, but the Order of the Obsidian Eye managed to finally defeat the malfunctioning construct, albeit at a great cost. However, they have not yet managed to defeat the trap that protects the door to the southeast. Harbinger hopes to find a clue on how to bypass the trap by translating the runes on the door, but even if his minions managed to kidnap Jazeela, he's got a long way to go before the runes can be deciphered.

The runes on the door are in an archaic language that combines ancient Common and Draconic. One phrase in particular is more prominent than the others; a successful DC 30 Decipher Script check by someone who can read either Common or Draconic reveals this phrase to be: "He who takes the eye awakens the desert and raises the head of the wyrm." The remaining runes on the door are in the same language and comprise the equivalent of 120 pages of text. Translating the runes requires a successful DC 30 Decipher Script check per page equivalent—this represents about a minute of work. Translating the entire door could take hours, or even days, as a result. A far more efficient translation method is the *comprehend languages* spell. Reading the entire door with the aid of this spell takes two hours, and as a result likely requires multiple castings of the spell. The door's runes, once translated, tell a complex story of the nine trials an ancient hero of Anuk-Saal endured in order to win the love of a beautiful princess.

In addition to being trapped, the stone door is locked with an *arcane lock* (caster level 10), and the stone itself is magically treated (like the obelisk's walls)—these defenses have so far kept Harbinger and the monks out of the chamber beyond. If the *arcane lock* can be removed, the door can be opened with ease (but doing so still triggers the trap).

Magically treated door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 16; hp 120; Break DC 38 with *arcane lock* (28 without).

Trap: The trap itself is fairly simple. If anyone touches the door or tries to open it, the runes on the door flash with brilliant light before spewing forth a cone of electrical energy that fills the entire room.

Anuk IX intended for the Order of the Obsidian Eye to be able to enter this room safely. As a result, the trap can be temporarily negated for 1 minute by touching one of the obsidian spheres (carried by the monks and their mercenaries) that symbolize the *Obsidian Eye* to the door. The Order lost this bit of key information many centuries ago, but the story encoded in the runes contains a hint in a metaphorical code. Anyone who reads or hears the story told by the door's runes can make a DC 15 Intelligence check or a DC 20 bardic knowledge check to correctly interpret these clues and discover the method to safely bypass the trap.

Lightning trap: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; arc of lightning (6d4 electrical damage, DC 18 Reflex save halves); multiple targets (20-foot cone aimed to the northwest of the trap fills all of area **O6**); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 28.

O7. Inner Sanctum (EL 7)

Glowing crystals embedded in the walls brilliantly light this massive chamber. A series of circular stairs in the center of the room leads down to a turbulent pool of frothing water. A pedestal rises from the pool like an island, and from the center of this pedestal issues a powerful geyser of water that rises up to the ceiling above. A blackened dragon's skull sits suspended, motionless and seemingly unaffected by the swirling vortex of water that surrounds it. The hideous skull is crowned with a prominent horn that protrudes from the forehead, and its jagged maw hangs open. Within the maw floats a large black sphere of stone.

This chamber is a reliquary for the *Obsidian Eye*, an ancient artifact destined one day to play an important part in the resurrection of Anuk IX. Of course, Anuk IX knew better to leave the *Obsidian Eye* unprotected.

The proper method to remove the *Obsidian Eye* is to first place a smaller sphere of obsidian in each of the dragon skull's eye sockets. This done, a person must hold a third sphere in one hand while he removes the *Obsidian Eye* from between the skull's jaws with the other. Both Mio and Harbinger know this method for retrieving the *Obsidian Eye*, but unless they are magically compelled they do not reveal this information to the PCs, even under threat of death.

Any other attempt to claim the *Obsidian Eye* triggers a harrowing trap. The dragon skull chomps down tightly the instant the *Obsidian Eye* is moved. A character trying to claim the eye must make a DC 20 Reflex save, otherwise the skull bites into whatever was used to molest the *Obsidian Eye* for 2d6 points of damage. If this is a creature's limb, the skull holds the creature in place until it can make a DC 20 Strength check or Escape Artist check.

Creature: As the trap is triggered, a fiendish giant crocodile is summoned into the room. The fiendish giant crocodile remains in the room for 1 minute

before vanishing—until then, it attacks any living creatures in the area with a savage frenzy.

Fiendish Giant Crocodile: CR 5; Huge magical beast; HD 7d8+28; hp 59; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +21; Atk or Full Atk +11 melee (2d8+12, bite) or tail slap +11 melee (1d12+12); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA improved grab, smite good 1/day (+7 damage); SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., hold breath, low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire 5, spell resistance 12; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Hide +1 (+5 in water), Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +16.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Skill Focus (Hide).

Trap: The round after the skull chomps down, a stone wall slides down over the door to the northwest, sealing the room at the same time the hidden drains in the fountain close off. As water continues to pour into the room, the water level in the room rises by 1 foot per round. The ceiling is 15 feet high, so in 15 rounds the room becomes completely flooded. The room remains flooded for an hour before the fountain opens up, draining the room and resetting the trap.

Once the room begins flooding, a successful DC 24 Disable Device check stops the flooding.

Flood trap: CR 5; mechanical device, touch trigger, automatic reset; multiple targets (all targets in this room); liquid (water fills room); Search DC 20; Disable device DC 24.

Treasure: The *Obsidian Eye* is a potent magic artifact, yet its powers are currently dormant. The sphere itself is an impressive work of art, and is worth 5,000 gp to a buyer interested in ancient artwork. To someone who knows its true potential, of course, it is priceless.

Development: If someone other than a member of the Order of the Obsidian Eye removes the *Obsidian Eye* from this room, something deep in the desert takes notice. Only 1d6 rounds after the *Obsidian Eye* is brought out of the room, a rumbling begins deep underground, rapidly building to a deafening roar as the entire obelisk begins shaking. As the tremors build, the PCs must make a DC 10 Reflex save every round or be knocked prone; the DC for this saving throw increases by +1 each round. One minute later (when the DC is 20) the Obelisk begins to collapse. Creatures still inside the Black Obelisk at this point take 1d6 points of damage from falling debris each round (a DC 15 Reflex save avoids damage for that round). One minute after that, the Black Obelisk cracks to pieces and collapses in on itself. Anyone remaining inside at this time takes 8d6 points of damage (no save) and is buried. Anyone within 60 ft. of the obelisk takes 3d6 damage from careening blocks of stone and shards of crumbling obsidian (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage).

The Black Obelisk is no more.

Concluding the Adventure

The defeat of Harbinger and the Order of the Obsidian Eye is a minor triumph. If the PCs manage to recover the *Obsidian Eye* as well, they would do well to turn it over to Jazeela. She'll pay the PCs whatever reward they agreed upon before returning to civilization to study the artifact more and to hide it somewhere safe. The Order of the Obsidian Eye is a much larger organization than the monks encountered in this adventure—as word spreads that the *Obsidian Eye* has been taken from the desert, this group grows more and more bold (and more and more desperate) as the months pass. The time for Anuk IX's resurrection draws near, but without the *Obsidian Eye* his minions cannot complete the forbidden rites of remaking.

Over the following months, as these dark times draw near, more and more undead rise from the wastes; the ashen husks were merely the calm before the storm. Many of these undead creatures remain loyal to Anuk IX, and they eventually seek out the Order of the Obsidian Eye to offer their aid in recovering the relic. Rumors rise along the trade ways in the desert, whispered warnings of the coming "Lightning Curse of Anuk-Saal." Certainly, powerful thunderstorms seem more plentiful in the desert after the *Obsidian Eye* is taken from its cradle. What these grim omens foretell is left, for now, to mystery.

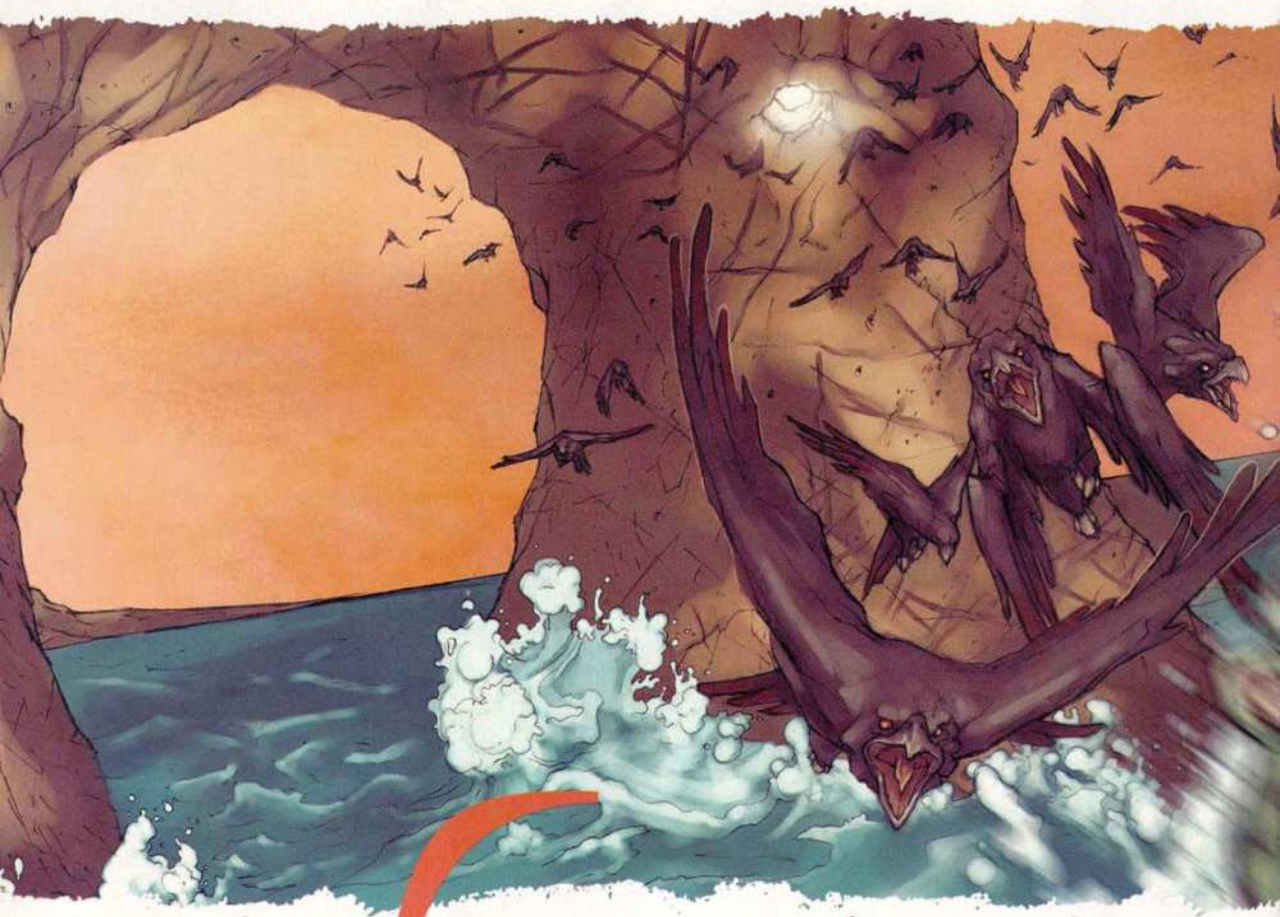
Brendan Victorson is a Urban Samurai 2/Freelance Writer 1—this is his DUNGEON debut. He is currently lost in translation somewhere between New York and Japan. This adventure marks Nicolas Logue's third appearance in DUNGEON, he is a monk 5/thespian 4/freelance writer 3 operating out of Hawaii. Nick and Brendan would like to dedicate this adventure to their mothers for being the best anyone could ever ask for.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Obsidian Eye" is designed for a group of four 4th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd-level characters or 5th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 4. Specific changes to the adventure include:

2nd–3rd-Level characters: Remove one (or even two) of the jackalweres from the adventure. Move the Black Obelisk closer to Kashral so that the PCs only need to spend a day traveling through the desert to reach their destination. Remove the encounter with the ashen husks entirely. Reduce the number of monks in area **O1** to 6–8, and the thri-kreen to only 1 or 2. The traps in areas **O6** and **O7** should have their Search and Disable Device DCs reduced by 2. The trap in area **O6** should do only 3d4 electrical damage, and the trap in area **O7** should summon two fiendish crocodiles rather than a single fiendish giant crocodile.

5th-Level characters: Relocate the Black Obelisk to a point deeper in the desert so the PCs are forced to spend a few more days navigating the waste. The PCs should encounter 3–4 ashen husks on their journey rather than 2. Don't increase the levels of the monks in area **O1**, but do add 2–3 2nd-level monks as sub-leaders to the area. If you have access to *Monster Manual II*, consider having the nimblewright still active in area **O6**, and increase the fiendish giant crocodile's Hit Dice by 3.



Forsaken Arch

by Timothy J. Haener

Playtesters: Tom Haener, Chad White, Chris Browne, Todd Noble, Matt Lindley
Illustrations by Attila Adorjany & Eva Wilderman
Cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

Any Setting • Mid-level • Dungeon Crawl

The village of Shoalbury is in dire straits. Bandits have been plundering shipments of pearls, the sole source of income for the beleaguered community. Is there a connection between the bandits and the strange, sudden increase of ravens and gulls in the region? And what sinister force has claimed the hidden coastal temple within the Forsaken Arch?

"Forsaken Arch" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 7th-level characters.

Adventure Background

There's trouble in Shoalbury, a sleepy village located in forested uplands overlooking the sea. Shipments of pearls, the community's sole export, are being targeted by a vicious band of inhuman bandits who stalk the lonely coastal road that connects Shoalbury to the rest of the world. Banditry has never been a problem in the region, so Mayor Palonious Firth was not quite sure how to deal with the situation. First he sought aid from the local government, but his plea went unanswered. Next, he tried hiring local adventuring and mercenary groups to seek out and destroy the bandits. Each time, these mercenaries vanished. Pearl production continued, but the next shipment will make or break the town. If it doesn't get through, Shoalbury won't have enough capital to make it through the coming winter.

The story behind Shoalbury's troubles is even more sinister than the mayor suspects. Several months ago, one of the village's pearl divers, a man named Argin Seacrust, fell on hard times. Then he made a fateful discovery while searching south of town for a new oyster bed. Wedged between some rocks 20 feet down he found a wooden coffer. Judging by its condition, it had only been underwater for a few weeks, and judging by its weight, it contained something heavy. He brought the coffer back to his bungalow and opened it up, and what he found inside changed his life forever.

Inside was a small, gold statuette of a humanoid creature with four wings and a hawk's head. Overwhelmed by the discovery, Argin took the statuette to a larger town to do some research on it, hoping to find out how much it was worth without telling anyone of his discovery. He learned that the statuette was in fact a representation of a powerful demon prince named Pazuzu. Even more interesting, he discovered that Pazuzu could be called upon by those in need, and that Pazuzu would provide powerful aid to those he deemed

worthy. For several long nights, Argin agonized over this knowledge, until finally he succumbed and spoke the demon prince's name three times.

Pazuzu appeared to Argin that night in a dream, revealing the location of a virgin oyster bed only a few miles south of Shoalbury. For the next several weeks, Argin harvested the strange red pearls from his hidden cove in secret, until a group of three rival pearl divers followed him one night and tried to steal from the claim. Enraged, Argin killed the claim-jumpers, realizing only afterward that he'd murdered three of his fellow villagers.

When, a few days later, he received a visit from a strange man dressed in dark robes, he thought at first that the authorities had discovered the murder. The truth was far more terrible: this man was a cultist of Pazuzu named Artimus Fisk. He knew all about the source of Argin's red pearls, and also knew that Argin had killed to defend it. All he wanted in return for his silence was regular updates on the schedules of pearl shipments leaving Shoalbury. Argin agreed, and in response Artimus invited him up to an abandoned temple known to locals as the Forsaken Arch. Artimus and his kenku followers had recently moved into the abandoned temple after the cultist received a vision telling him that an ally in Shoalbury would line his coffers with pearls. Artimus explained to Argin that each time he provided the cult with details on an outgoing shipment of pearls, his kenku minions would ambush the shipment and loot it. In return, Argin would receive a quarter of the pearls as payment for his betrayal. Argin's greed combined with his fear of exposure left the man no choice.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are in Shoalbury when Sergeant Gil Umpbrow, the sole survivor of the latest bandit raid, staggers into town. Gil's story spreads through Shoalbury like a tidal wave. The village leaders ask the PCs to help fight back against the bandits, and reveal that one of the villagers may be secretly allied with the thieves.

An investigation of Argin's bungalow confirms the PCs' suspicions. Following Argin's testimony or the clues in his home, the PCs travel to the Forsaken Arch and are in turn ambushed by kenku rogues. After the ambush, the PCs must explore the chambers within the Forsaken Arch and confront the cultists if Shoalbury is to be saved.

Adventure Hook

"Forsaken Arch" begins as the PCs witness the return of a badly wounded guard whose caravan was assaulted by bandits. Their reasons for being in Shoalbury when this event occurs can be coincidental (they might be stopping in town during a journey, for example), but it's best if they've come to the village for a reason somewhat related to the plot. Here is one possible adventure hook:

- The stoppage of pearl shipments from Shoalbury has started to annoy the nobility of one of the larger northern cities. An affluent merchant asks the PCs to travel south to the village and find out why the pearl shipments have ceased; he promises a reward of 3,000 gp in pearls if the PCs can get the shipments moving again.

Chapter One: Secrets in Shoalbury

The region near this seacoast village is mountainous and rugged, with little vegetation save thick stands of gnarled brush. Semi-arid and rocky, the area is not very hospitable and does not support cultivation. Shoalbury itself is a cooperative of individuals who pooled their resources to support the harvest of fine pearls found in nearby oyster beds. The citizens are hard working and humble, and now they're worried about their future. A collective of four men selected by the people governs the village. The recent bandit attacks have eroded the villagers' faith in these leaders, and townsfolk are seriously contemplating leaving Shoalbury.

The village itself is located about 200 feet from shore, nestled in a low valley between barren, craggy hills. Three short piers serve as staging areas for the villagers when they dive for pearls, as well as docks for the four community fishing boats. Due to the lack of significant vegetation in the region, the buildings in the village are primarily made of rock and mud with thatch roofs. None of the town's buildings have more than one floor. A 15-foot-high loose stone wall surrounds the town.

Shoalbury Encounter Areas

The Village of Shoalbury map depicts the topography around the town, the location of the three oyster fields, and the configuration of major buildings within the village. Key areas of the village are detailed briefly below.

Shoalbury

Shoalbury (village): Conventional; AL NG; Population 415; 200 gp limit; Assets 4,150 gp; Mixed (human 80%, half-elf 8%, gnome 5%, halfling 3%, elf 2%, half-orc 1%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Palonious Firth, council member (LG male human aristocrat 4); Argin Seacrust, council member (CN male human fighter 7/duelist 2); Trek, council member (NG half-elf ranger 5); Balrak Lough, town priest and council member (LN human male cleric 4).

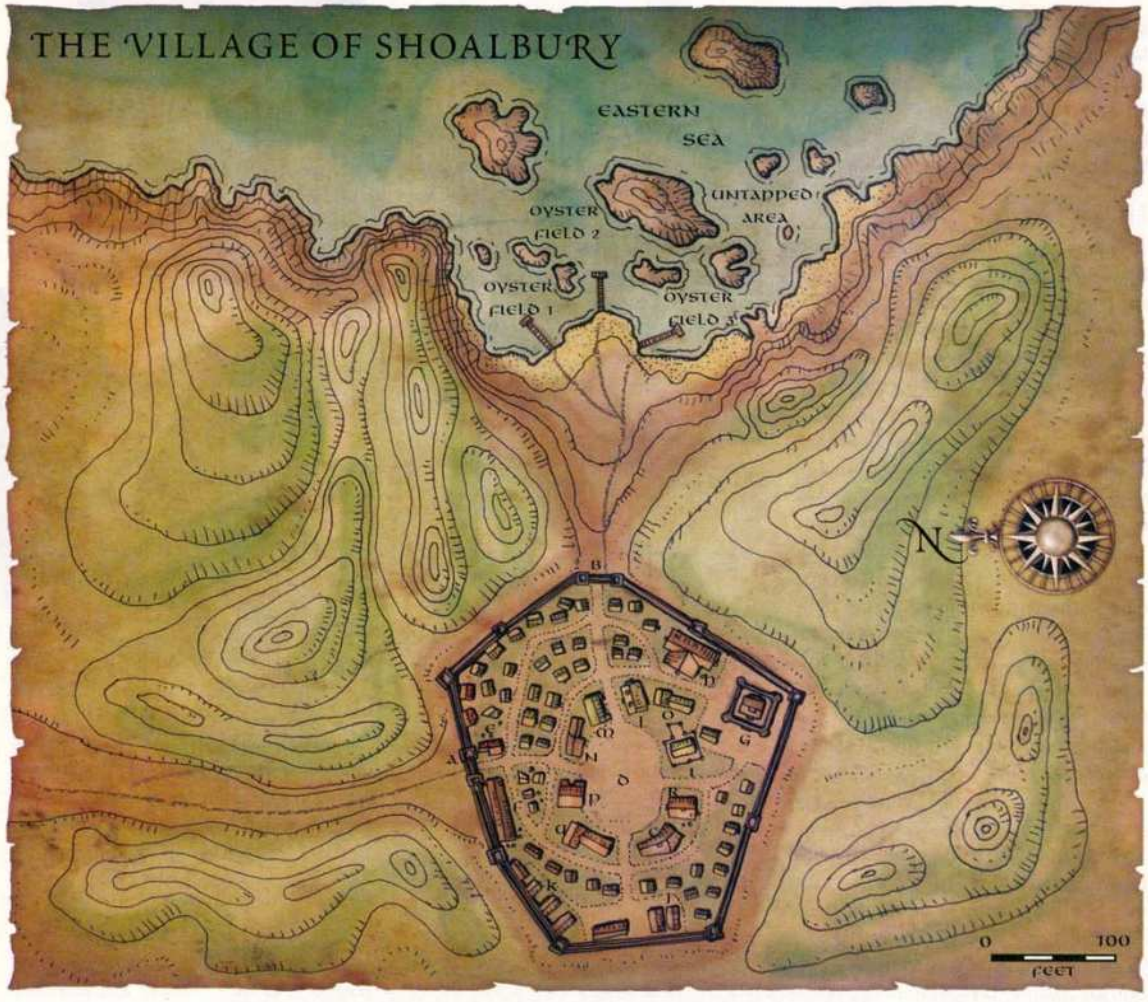
Important Characters: Gil Umpbrow, militia commander (NG male human fighter 3).

A. North Gate

A single open watchtower squats over the main gate into the village. The gate itself is made of rusting iron, and while normally kept open, the gates are now closed due to the recent bandit activity. A single guard (human warrior 1) stands watch here. If trouble breaks out, the guard rings an iron bell to alert the town's militia.

B. East Gate

This entrance is similar in style to the North Gate, save that it is typically unmanned since the villagers have little reason to fear invasion from the sea.



C. The Reluctant Oyster

The only hostel in Shoalbury, this inn, bar, and restaurant serves visitors or tradesmen as well as locals. The rough stone building sports a crude dining area and large fireplace. Fare is usually excellent, but in these hard times meals have been reduced to raw oysters and watered-down mead. Only one visitor is currently staying at the Oyster—Morash Gilfodder (NG male human commoner 3). Morash came to the village to seek employment as a pearl diver, but having experienced the current state of affairs, he plans to leave soon. The establishment's gregarious owner, Dregg Bottomspot (NG male human fighter 3), freely expresses his opinions about the recent hard times.

D. Village Square

This courtyard is paved with dusty cobblestones and bordered by various businesses. A common well positioned in the north quadrant of the square provides Shoalbury with a dependable (if slightly brackish) water supply.

E. Blacksmith

Ichabod the blacksmith (LG male dwarf expert 4) toils here, working for the nearby stable as well as maintaining equipment for the villagers. He's the only dwarf in town, which suits him fine; his intolerance of other dwarves is as mysterious as it is unexpected.

F. Stables

Marla Junhowsen (NG female half-elf commoner 3) and her sons Merik, Tablin, and Shalo (all NG male half-elf warrior 1) run these stables. The petite elf offers excellent livery, but her hay and oat supply has fallen dangerously low.

G. Firth Mansion

The only wooden house in town (built entirely from lumber imported from the north) is a tall one-story affair graced with stone statues and a grand outer staircase. The grounds include

a gravel road, grassy courtyard with a few stunted and struggling trees, and a guardhouse. Two half-elf attendants (NG female commoner 1) dwell in the mansion along with the town's richest founder, Palonious Firth.

H. Pearl Works

A dozen or so villagers normally work here, meticulously sorting and polishing pearls. The recent bandit activity has forced most of the divers to stop working, and this building is currently empty as a result.

I. Church

This church, a rather tall stone building with open windows, serves as the place of worship for the town's inhabitants. The church is non-denominational, and as such the interior is devoid of any specific items representing any one deity. Crude wooden pews and candles are the only obvious signs that identify this as a place of worship. Balrak Lough, the town's highest-ranking cleric, dwells here and does his best to serve the villagers as a spiritual leader.

J. Barracks

Sized to house 20 soldiers, the barracks are currently almost empty because nearly all the militia members have been killed in ambushes by the bandits. These low mud and stone buildings are quickly falling into disrepair. Of the original contingent, only four warriors remain (all NG male human warrior 2). They share guard duty at the village's main gate.

K. Food and Provisions Storage

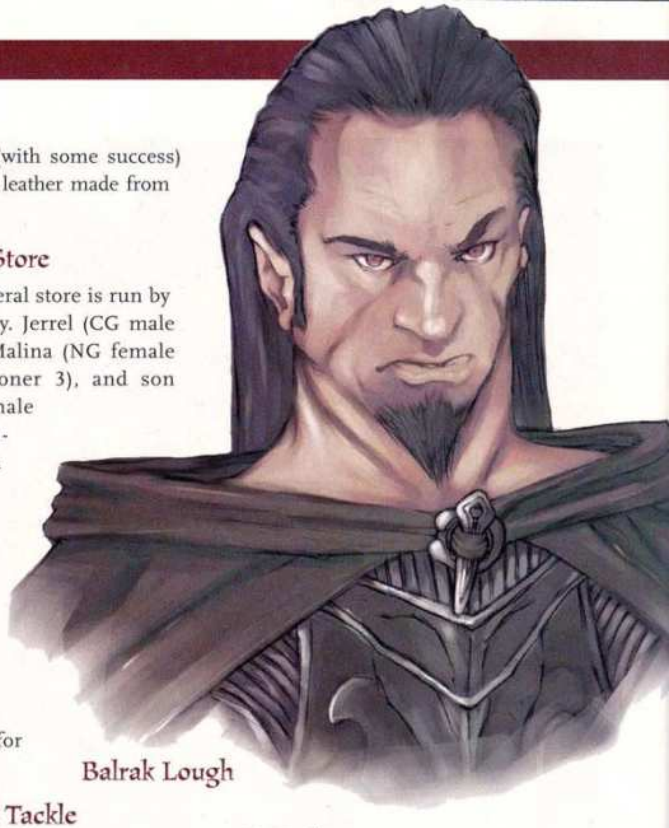
The villagers use these stone buildings with large front doors to store excess provisions for the rough winter. Currently all the units are empty except one, which is half full of grain and kegs of watery mead. Several cats keep this area free from mice.

L. Leatherworker

Borak Shull (NG male human expert 2) plies his trade in this small stone building. He works primarily with imported hides and leather, but has lately been experimenting (with some success) at working with leather made from shark hides.

M. General Store

The town's general store is run by the Trass family. Jerrel (CG male elf expert 3), Malina (NG female human commoner 3), and son Aberfly (CG male half-elf commoner 1) each work and live here. The store normally services visitors and traders; locals only visit the place to talk with the Trasses or to place orders for luxury items.



Balrak Lough

N. Rope and Tackle Shop

This shop, owned by a grisly one-legged half-orc named Kruger Tak-Mog (CG male half-orc ranger 3), sells fishing items, nets, ropes, tar, and the like. One wall displays two masterwork harpoons Kruger uses to catch sharks for his friend Borak.

O. Cooperative Office

This is the village Cooperative's business office, and is where Trek works during the day (he typically sleeps out under the stars in the hills south of town). He keeps records of past pearl harvests, a village census, and records of what provisions have been given to each family and how much money each family has been given for their labors. With the ongoing troubles, this building is unusually idle. Pearls awaiting shipment are kept in a large safe in a back room; the safe is currently empty.

P. Weaver

Jules Loughhaff (NG male human expert 3) and his wife Zelda (NG female elf expert 2) provide Shoalbury with baskets and thatch for roof repairs. The couple has remained cheerfully optimistic throughout the recent troubles.

Q. Tailor

Completely out of stock, Wella Hempmouser (female human expert 2) now spends her time on her rocking chair on the front porch, waiting for the council to announce the village's abandonment.

R. Chowderhouse

Once a bustling eatery, the owners of this building have already left town. A note pinned to the front door of this relatively nice stone building announces that it is closed until further notice.

S. Oyster Docks

These floating docks are made of long logs lashed together with leather and strips of wood—they float up and down with the tide. Attached to the end of each dock is a small bungalow made of stout lumber. These three bungalows are the homes of the three lead pearl divers. Argin Seacrust, a lead diver, lives in the small bungalow at the end of the southernmost dock near the southernmost pearl field. Workers dive from the docks to cultivate and retrieve oysters from the rocky crags below. Others use spears to fend off the many sharks that show an interest in the workers. None

of the villagers have harvested the fields in several days.

Event 1: Lone Survivor

The PCs should arrive in Shoalbury the day after the Cooperative attemped a desperate plan; they tried to smuggle a shipment of pearls up the coast in a fishing vessel rather than by land. Of course, Seacrust was in on this plan and alerted the bandits, and they not only raided the ship but sunk it as well. Only one guard, a man named Gil Umpbrow, survived the ambush, albeit with only one eye intact.

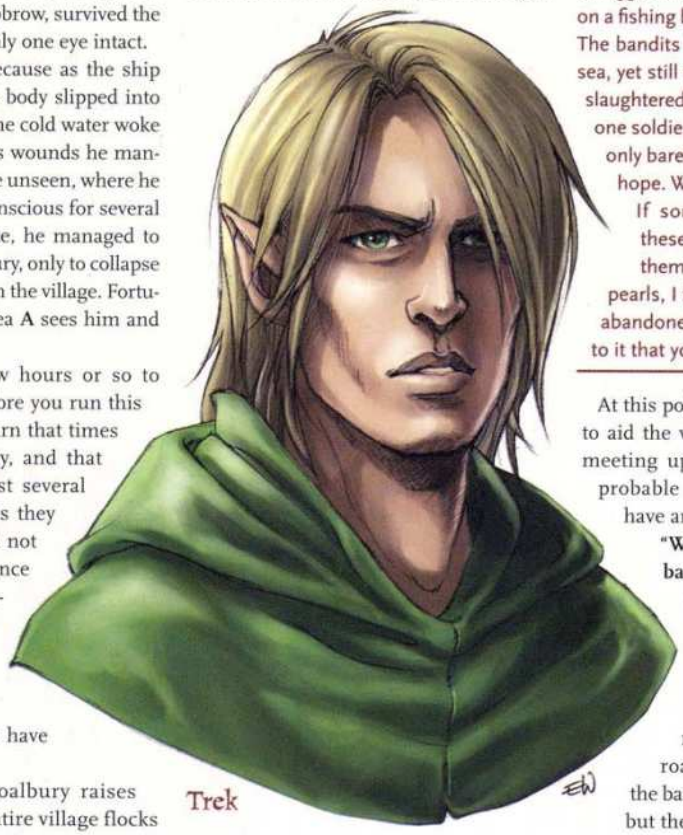
Gil survived only because as the ship sunk, his unconscious body slipped into the sea. The shock of the cold water woke him, and even with his wounds he managed to make it to shore unseen, where he collapsed and lay unconscious for several hours. When he awoke, he managed to stagger back to Shoalbury, only to collapse a few hundred feet from the village. Fortunately, the guard in area **A** sees him and raises the alarm.

Give the PCs a few hours or so to explore Shoalbury before you run this event. They should learn that times are hard in Shoalbury, and that bandits raided the last several shipments of pearls as they left town. This should not only give the PCs a chance to familiarize themselves with the village, but also gives the villagers and their leaders time to learn that adventurers have arrived in town.

Gil's return to Shoalbury raises quite a stir, and the entire village flocks to the northern end of town to watch as Balrak, Palonious, and several militiamen race out to collect the unconscious man. After Balrak heals what wounds he can, Gil is brought home to rest while the councilmen retire to the Cooperative Office to meet. The villagers gather in the village square, eager to hear news, but none are allowed inside the building.

Nevertheless, Palonious (or one of the other council members apart from Seacrust the PCs may have made contact with) invites the PCs to the meeting—he hopes that they'll be able to help.

Present at the meeting are most of the village council. Palonious Firth sits at the head of the table, dressed in a fine suit of chainmail decorated with pearls. He appears haggard, and looks as if he was in a brawl the night before. To his left sits Balrak Lough, his face inscrutable as he strokes his goatee and watches Firth. To Firth's right sits Trek, a blond half-elf man with an intense look in his eyes and a large stack of papers on the table before him. A fourth chair sits empty beside Trek. The PCs are invited to sit in the remaining chairs. After introductions, Palonious addresses the PCs in a deep baritone voice.



Trek

I had hoped our fourth member, Mr. Seacrust, would realize the import of this meeting and grace us with his presence, but I guess he has more important things to do. No matter. As you have no doubt learned, our village is under siege. A group of bandits has taken an interest in our pearl trade. It's been over six months since any of our pearl shipments have made it to market, and nearly as long since we've been able to purchase supplies. The bandits seem to know our schedule as well as we do, and it's been my suspicion for some time that we have a traitor in our midst. This latest event has all but confirmed my fears. Last night, we tried to smuggle a large shipment of pearls north on a fishing boat, rather than use the road. The bandits had no reason to look to the sea, yet still they struck our transport and slaughtered its crew nearly to a man. Only one soldier, Gil Umpbrow, survived, and only barely. This shipment was our last hope. We are now nearly defenseless. If someone can't find wherever these bandits are holed up, drive them out, and reclaim our stolen pearls, I fear Shoalbury will have to be abandoned. If you can help us, I'll see to it that you are rewarded well.

At this point, assuming the PCs agree to aid the village, Palonious opens the meeting up to questions. Answers to probable questions the PCs might have are as follows.

"What do you know about the bandits?" Counting the supposedly secret shipment that was attacked last night, the last four shipments of pearls have all been lost to the bandits. Other shipments and travelers on the road have been unmolested; the bandits obviously want nothing but the pearls. Almost all of Shoalbury's militia have now perished, since they were working as caravan guards for all the ambushed shipments. Scouts have been sent to all nearby caves and known smuggler coves, but none of these locations had any sign of activity; wherever the bandits are holed up, it's somewhere new. After Firth is done, Trek adds one more thing in a soft voice—while they've recovered all the bodies of the slain militia folk, they were all missing their eyes. It seems that pearls aren't the only things the bandits are interested in...

"What happened to you? You look like you got in a fight!" Palonious sighs and says merely that there was a misunderstanding between himself and another villager, but Balrak speaks up somewhat angrily in his place, revealing that Palonious had a scuffle with the fourth council member, Argin Seacrust, a few nights before. The two had a huge argument about how to stage the secret shipment of pearls. Argin had argued for an overland shipment disguised as a group of pilgrims, but Palonious insisted on sending the shipment via a fishing boat. The argument had erupted into a fight, with Argin (a far better fighter) soundly humiliating Palonious. The two haven't spoken since.

"Can we speak to Gil Umpbrow?" Palonious looks to Balrak for an answer to this question. The cleric thinks for a moment, then nods, but asks that he may be present during the questioning in case Gil needs his attention.

"Who do you suspect is the traitor?" This question touches a nerve. Balrak and Trek believe that there is no traitor—that the bandits are using some sort of powerful divination magic to spy on the village. Palonious argues that the simplest explanation is usually the right one; if the bandits could spy on them with magic, why didn't they use this magic to invade the town earlier when their guard was down? If pressed, Palonious says he suspects none other than Argin; his attitude of late and his absence from this meeting are damning in Palonious's eyes, and the fact that he knew the schedules for all the pearl shipments makes him a key suspect. Trek is quick to point out that all four of them knew the schedules—by that reasoning, any of the council members could be this "traitor." This comment causes the three men to grow quiet and thoughtful. The one thing that all three men agree on is that word of suspected traitors shouldn't spread to the village, not only to curtail panic, but to keep from alerting a possible bandit sympathizer that the gig is up.

"What kind of reward are we talking about?" Palonious promises the PCs a pouch of pearls worth no less than 3,000 gp; if the PCs are in Shoalbury at the behest of a northern merchant who offered a similar award, they stand to make a cool 6,000 gp total from this mission.

Once the meeting comes to a conclusion, Palonious asks the PCs what their opinions are. All three men are desperate, and they'll readily agree to anything the PCs propose as long as it doesn't require much support from them. They can't afford to spare any of their militia in case the bandits attack the village, and hope the PCs can find the bandit lair and rout them before they launch a full attack on Shoalbury.

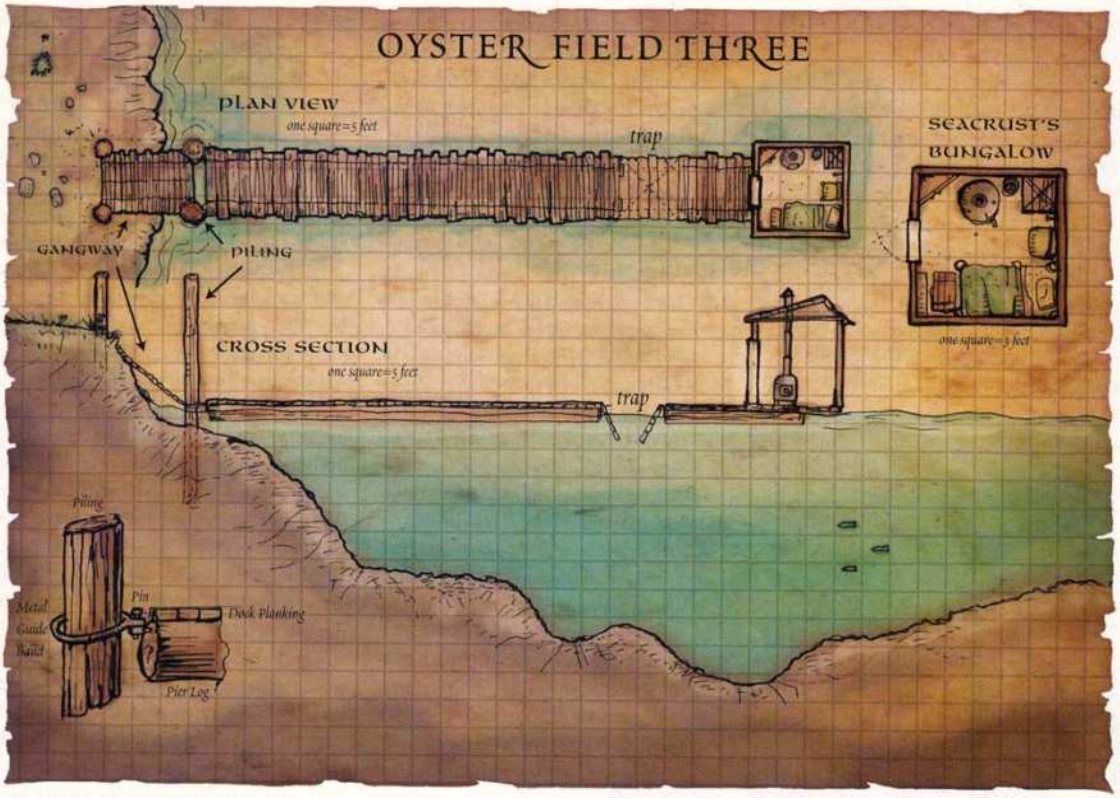
Event 2: Questioning Gil

Although the PCs are free to question the villagers about the bandits, none of them have any useful information (although feel free to have some spin tall tales about the bandits being giants or drow or some other notorious creatures). With the exception of Argin Seacrust (see event **3**), the only villager who has useful information is Gil Umpbrow, the soldier who survived the latest attack.

Balrak has healed most of Gil's wounds, but has been unable to do anything about his missing eye. Nevertheless, Gil is awake when the PCs come to question him. He's still a little shaken up from the assault, but does his best to tell the PCs what he can remember of the attack.

The one thing Gil is sure of is that the ambush was swift and potent. The ship was sailing with minimal light, using the light of the stars and moon. Gil was looking out to shore when the ambush occurred, as a group of humanoid figures mounted on horses charged across the waves, galloping over the surface of the water and up to the boat with shocking speed. As the horses reached the boat, two humanoids leapt from their backs onto deck to reveal themselves to be terrible bird-like menaces armed with bows and swords. As the crew fought against them, another figure dropped out of the sky onto the deck—a massive horned ogre that used magic to quickly break the defensive ranks. The combined might of the ogre and the uncanny precision of the bird-men was more than enough to overwhelm the crew. Gil did his best to fight back, but as the bird-men cut down his allies and plucked their eyes from their skulls with their claws and beaks, it was obvious things were lost. One of the bird-men managed to knock Gil down and plucked out one of his eyes before the ship's captain, an old friend of Gil's named Stalgie, clubbed the bird-man senseless with a gaff. Gil staggered to his feet but stumbled over another body and was pitched into the sea; he only barely managed to make it to shore before collapsing. When he awoke

Palonious Firth



the next morning, half-covered with seaweed and sand from the surf, there was no sign of the bandits or the fishing boat.

Gil doesn't know much else about the bandits, and recounting the attack brings him to tears—several of his friends were killed in the ambush, and now all he wants to do is recover and leave town to seek a new life elsewhere.

Event 3: A Visit with Seacrust (EL 10)

Sooner or later, the PCs are going to want to interview Argin Seacrust. Anyone in town can tell them that the pearl diver lives in a bungalow at the end of the southernmost pier to the east of town. Many villagers look up to Argin and trust his leadership. As the PCs approach Argin Seacrust's bungalow, read them the following.

The mild surf washes toward a rocky shore outfitted with three floating piers. Each of these piers is just over a hundred feet long, and a small bungalow sits at the end of each. A ramp consisting of thick boards tied with stout leather ropes secures each floating pier to the shore, the pier itself rising and falling with the passing waves.

Since falling in with the bandits, Seacrust has grown increasingly paranoid. He's rigged a simple trap in the planks of his pier, about 20 feet from his bungalow. The door to his bungalow is barred from the inside.

Seacrust's hut is simply furnished with a bed, a cupboard, a small stove and some firewood, a wooden chair, and a footlocker. A small trapdoor in one corner of the room that opens up to the water below serves as a latrine. A lever used to spring the trap in front of the shack is positioned on the wall opposite the front door.

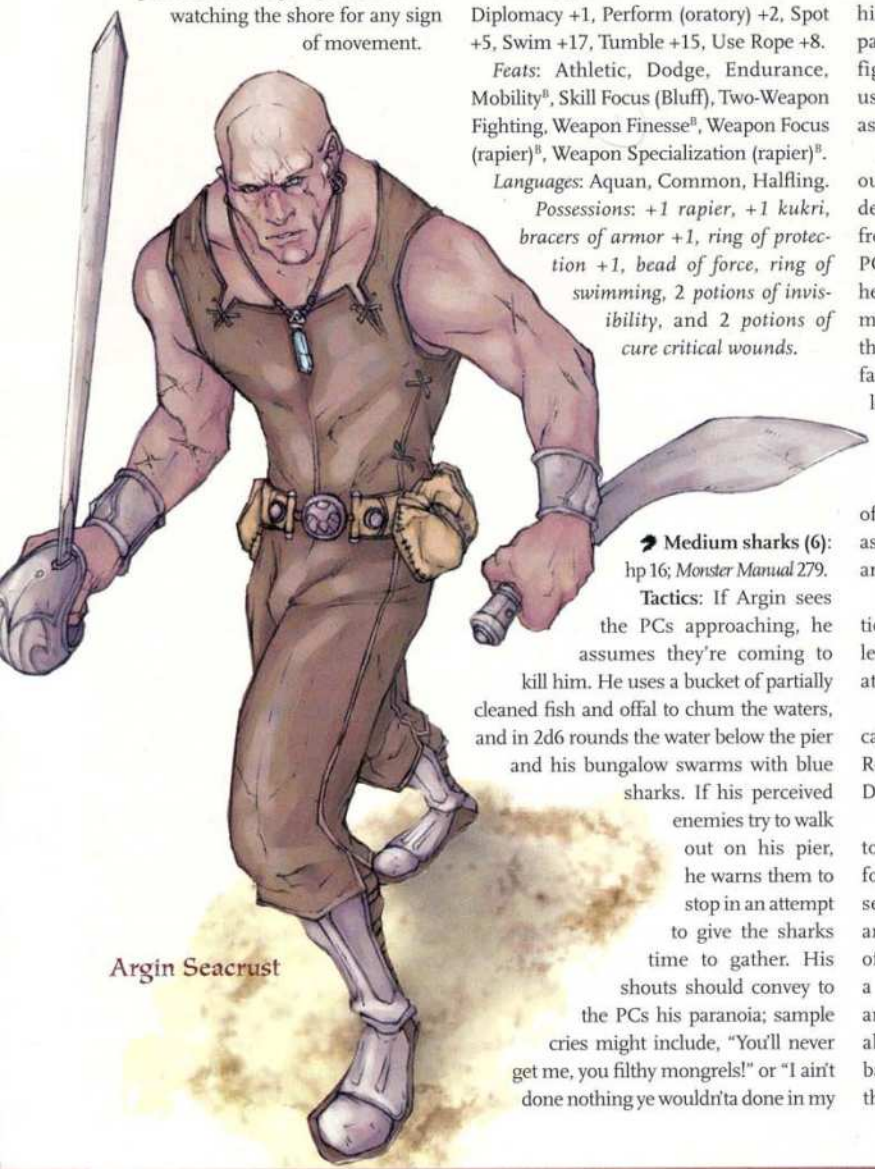
Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 16; Open Lock DC 18.

Creature: Argin Seacrust was something of a loner even before he found the statuette of Pazuzu in the sunken chest and fell under the demon prince's influence. Since then, he's grown even more surly. Seacrust is an imposing physical specimen—tall, muscular, and very nimble. At thirty-three years, he's in prime condition, but his face is browned from the sun and scarred from numerous encounters with sharks (who have learned to hate the diver who has killed so many of their number). Seacrust is totally devoid of hair—even his eyebrows are missing. He favors a dark brown, tight-fitting seal-skin suit and boots as clothing.

As his bandit allies continued to ambush pearl shipments, Argin's greed grew at the same rate as his paranoia. When he and the other council members met to discuss the logistics of how to smuggle some pearls to civilization, he tried to make sure the shipment went by land since he was unsure the bandits could handle an aquatic ambush. The ensuing argument with Palonious came to blows, and Argin was only barely able to stay his hand and avoid killing him,

but managed to hide his murderous intent with some quick talking.

This sudden surge of anger shocked him, and as a result, Argin spent the next few days hiding in his bungalow. His paranoia has reached a critical level now, and he's gone so far as to rig the pier leading to his home with a crude trap. Partially afraid that Palonious and the other villagers have found out he betrayed them to the bandits and partially convinced that the bandits themselves are coming to kill him now that their ambushes have all but broken Shoalbury's back and put a stop to the pearl harvest, Argin spends his time watching the shore for any sign of movement.



Argin Seacrust

If he has time to prepare, the waters around his bungalow are alive with a pack of six Medium sharks (see Tactics, below).

Argin Seacrust, male human fighter 7/duelist 2: CR 9, Medium humanoid; HD 9d10+18; hp 58; Init +5; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +9; Grp +10; Atk +14 melee (1d6+4/18–20, *+1 rapier*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+4/18–20, *+1 rapier*) and +12 melee (1d4+1/18–20, *+1 kukri*); SA —; SQ canny defense, improved reaction +2; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +9, Climb +3, Diplomacy +1, Perform (oratory) +2, Spot +5, Swim +17, Tumble +15, Use Rope +8.

Feats: Athletic, Dodge, Endurance, Mobility[B], Skill Focus (Bluff), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (rapier)[B], Weapon Specialization (rapier)[B].

Languages: Aquan, Common, Halfling.

Possessions: *+1 rapier, +1 kukri, bracers of armor +1, ring of protection +1, bead of force, ring of swimming, 2 potions of invisibility*, and *2 potions of cure critical wounds.*

Medium sharks (6): hp 16; *Monster Manual* 279.

Tactics: If Argin sees the PCs approaching, he assumes they're coming to kill him. He uses a bucket of partially cleaned fish and offal to chum the waters, and in 2d6 rounds the water below the pier and his bungalow swarms with blue sharks. If his perceived enemies try to walk out on his pier, he warns them to stop in an attempt to give the sharks time to gather. His shouts should convey to the PCs his paranoia; sample cries might include, "You'll never get me, you filthy mongrels!" or "I ain't done nothing ye wouldn'ta done in my place!" or "Turn around now, you curs, afore you regret it!"

Once anyone approaches within 20 feet of his front door, Argin pulls the lever to activate the Trap. He then prepares an action to drink one of his *potions of invisibility* if anyone manages to break through his door. If he hears someone trying to pick the lock on his door, he jams his rapier through a crack in an attempt to stab whoever's on the other side. The target gains total concealment (50% miss chance) and a +4 bonus to his AC from cover.

His first action in combat is to throw his *bead of force* at the back ranks of the party, after which he engages in melee, fighting with both his weapons and using his potions of *cure critical wounds* as necessary.

If things look desperate, Seacrust calls out to Pazuzu for aid. Repeating the demon prince's name three times is a free action for him, but fortunately for the PCs, Pazuzu lost interest in Argin once he became chaotic evil, and the paranoid man's pleas for aid go unanswered. In this event, despair finally shows on his face, and if not stopped, he attempts to leap into the shark-infested waters to end his shameful life. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (religion or the planes) check is enough to recognize the name of the Prince of Lower Aerial Kingdoms, as well as old legends that he sometimes answers cries for aid.

Trap: Argin has rigged a 20-foot section of the pier to collapse if he pulls a lever in his bungalow. Sharks in the area attack anyone who falls into the water.

Sharkbaiting trap: CR 1; mechanical; manual trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids fall into water; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

Treasure: Seacrust's hut may seem to be fairly innocuous, yet his locked footlocker (Open Lock DC 25) contains several bits of damning evidence. First and foremost are three leather pouches of large red pearls. Each pouch contains a dozen 100 gp pearls. These pearls are the property of the villagers of Shoalbury, payment given to Argin by the bandits for his betrayal. Sitting next to the three pouches is a golden statuette

of a humanoid figure with a hawk's head and feet and four large feathered wings. The statuette feels strangely cold to the touch. This is the statuette of Pazuzu Argin found. Although not itself magical or evil in nature, it is still responsible for Argin's fall from grace. The statuette is worth 500 gp to a collector.

Finally, below the pouches and the statue are several folded sheets of parchment. These sheets contain detailed notes on pearl shipment logistics, along with several marks on a regional map that seem to indicate prospective ambush points. Only two marks are located off the main road leading out of Shoalbury; one can be verified as the site of the fishing boat ambush, but the other is unlabeled. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check, or asking around in Shoalbury with a successful DC 15 Gather Information check, reveals that this X marks the location of an impressive arch of stone in a secluded harbor to the north. Known as the "Forsaken Arch," this cove was considered as a possible site for the village but rejected due to the large number of sea cats that infest the waters nearby.

Development: Although difficult, it's not impossible to capture Seacrust alive. If the PCs can adjust his initial attitude from hostile to friendly (either with a successful DC 35 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, or with a spell like *charm person* or *suggestion*), he breaks down and confesses his sins, from the murder of the three claim jumpers to providing the bandits with pearl shipment schedules. If he's been killed, a *speak with dead* can reveal much of this information.

Argin tells the PCs that the bandits are kenku rogues, that their leader seems to be a powerful cleric, and that their base of operations is inside a large natural rock formation called the Forsaken Arch, to the north. He hasn't been into their stronghold, but he does know that the primary entrance is via a hidden cave in the northeast arm of the arch. He won't reveal his connection to Pazuzu unless confronted with the demon's name or the statue in his footlocker, at which point he begs the PCs to melt the statue down and to never speak the demon's name aloud. Left unguarded, Argin attempts suicide at the earliest opportunity.

Event 4: Magical Investigation

While it's likely that the PCs find all the clues they need at Seacrust's bungalow to lead them north to the Forsaken Arch, they can use divination magic to gain even more information about the bandits and their hidden fortress. *Scrying* and *detect thoughts* can be used to spy on suspected traitors to try to catch them in the act of betraying Shoalbury. Although all of the bodies from the first three ambushes have been recovered, they've all been buried. It takes a successful DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check to gain permission to exhume bodies for *speak with dead* spells. This line of investigation doesn't result in any more information than Gil can already provide in event 2. *Divination* can be quite useful in leading the PCs toward the Forsaken Arch if a cleric casts the spell in an attempt to locate the bandit stronghold.

It's unlikely that a 7th-level party has access to *commune* or higher-level divination spells, but if they do, simply use the results of these spells to point them toward either Seacrust's bungalow or toward the Forsaken Arch itself.

Chapter Two: Pazuzu's Pawns

Once the PCs discover that the bandits have holed up in the Forsaken Arch (either by questioning Argin Seacrust, finding his maps and documents, or by using divination magic), the second chapter of this adventure begins. None of the locals know that an entire temple complex is hidden within the Forsaken Arch, but they all know of the arch's location.

The road out of Shoalbury leads north for about 4 miles before it turns inland along a river. The river can be forded easily here, and on the far bank a somewhat overgrown trail continues north—this trail was abandoned some time ago for the inland route when monsters grew too common along its reach. A successful DC 18 Survival check made by someone with the Track feat is enough for the character to note that several humanoid forms have used the road recently, and that they've taken some pains to hide the evidence of their passage. The overgrown trail winds through rugged hill terrain—travel along the trail is at 3/4 normal, so a party moving at a speed of 30 ft. can cover the 5 miles between Shoalbury and the Forsaken Arch in about 2 1/2 hours. Characters who wish to travel off-road may do so, but the rugged hills reduce their speed to 1/2 normal, and each hour of movement requires a successful DC 15 Climb check to navigate the frequent steep slopes and cliffs. Failure of this Climb check by 5 or more results in a fall of 1d3×10 feet.

About a mile and a half north of the river, the trail passes within a few hundred yards of the secluded cove dominated by the Forsaken Arch a mile north of the river. North of this cove, the trail soon peters out. The cove itself is thick with submerged reefs and jagged rocks—approach by sea in anything larger than a rowboat is close to impossible; the safest way to reach the bandits' lair is via the overgrown trail, yet this route is not without its dangers.

Pazuzu

The villains in this adventure are cultists of a demon prince named Pazuzu. Also known as the Lord of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms, Pazuzu takes a perverse delight in corrupting the pure of heart and otherwise meddling in mortal affairs. The troubles plaguing Shoalbury are the result of this demon's meddling; his corruption of Argin Seacrust gave Artimus and his cultists the foothold they needed to ruin the village. If the PCs fail to stop the cultists and Shoalbury is abandoned, they'll move in and establish a village of their own in Pazuzu's name, a village that could one day become the seat of power of a dangerous band of demon-worshipers.

Although Pazuzu delights in making personal appearances, he himself won't come to aid his cultists in this adventure. If Artimus's cultists can't handle Shoalbury on their own, they are of little interest or use to the Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms.

For more details on Pazuzu and his cult, check out "Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Pazuzu" in *DRAGON* #329.

Trap: Characters who take the time and brave the frequent Climb checks by taking an overland route to the Forsaken Arch automatically bypass the *alarm* that the bandits have used to ward the trail just north of the river ford. One of the bandit leaders, a kenku bard named Shambus, makes the journey to this site every night on a *phantom steed* to renew the extended *alarm*. If the PCs trigger it, the mental alarm alerts the bard and he orders the kenku bandits to prepare an ambush further up the road.

Bandit Ambush (EL 8)

The bandits have expected Shoalbury to hire mercenaries to track them down for some time, yet until the PCs approach the Forsaken Arch none have come close to discovering their hidden lair. To protect their hideout from discovery, the bandits have placed several of their number along the coastal trail in ambush at the point where the coastal hills dip down low enough to allow travelers on the trail to notice the Forsaken Arch.

Creatures: The ambush point lies in a low valley between three cragged hills. If the PCs triggered the *alarm* earlier, a group of ten kenku rogues lies in wait here, ready to ambush the PCs once they are surrounded. If the PCs trigger the *alarm* but do not approach the Forsaken Arch by the trail, the kenku return to area **4** of the Forsaken Arch to aid in its defense once they notice the PCs approaching from a different direction, or once Shambus uses *whispering wind* to recall them.

If the PCs didn't trigger the alarm, the only thing they'll have to cope with in this area is an assassin vine that grows near one of the stunted trees east of the road.

Kenku are humanoids evolved from avians, although they no longer possess wings. Soft, dark feathers cover their head and torso, although their scrawny arms and legs are bare. A kenku's head has beady black eyes and a cruel black beak.

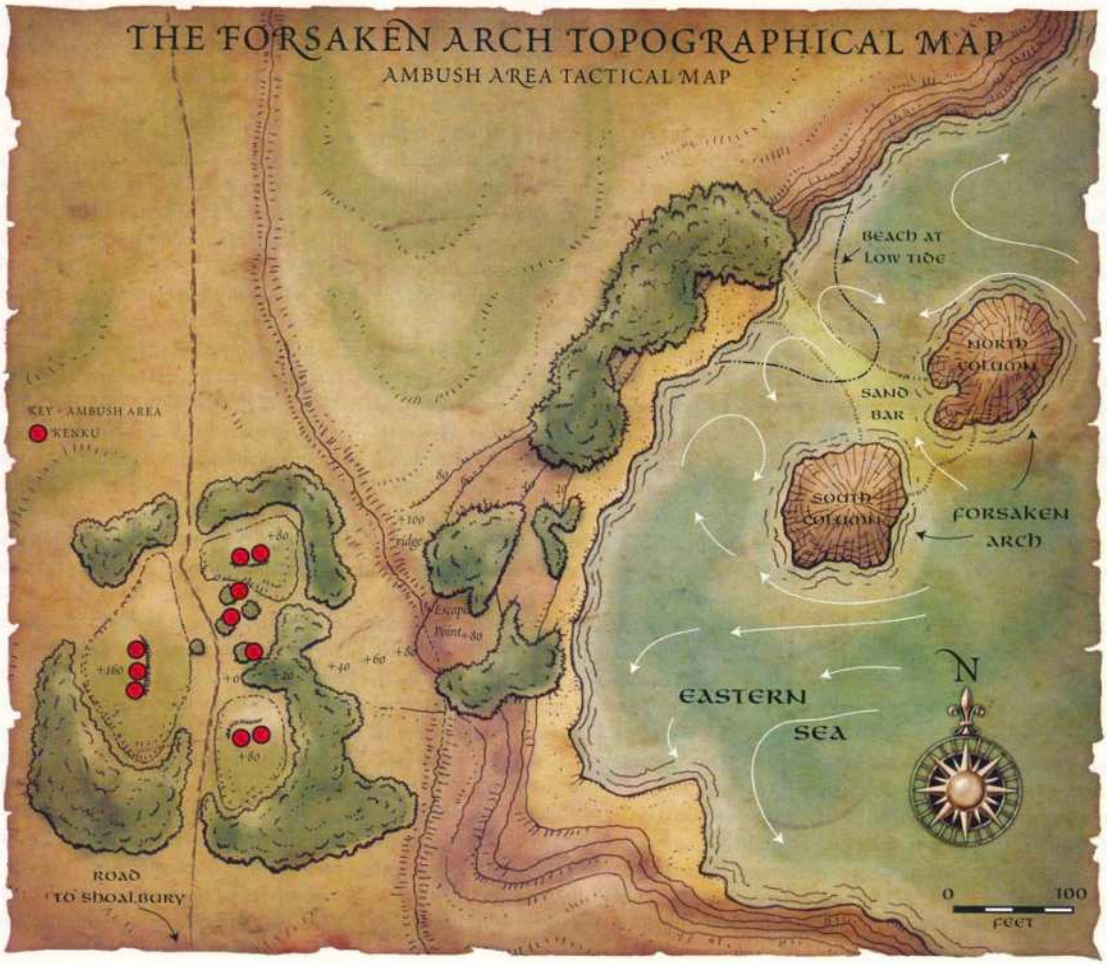
Kenku sneaks, rogue 1 (10): CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6–1; hp 5 each; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp –1; Atk –1 melee (1d3–1, claw) or –1 melee (1d6–1, shortsword) or +4 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk –1 melee (1d3–1, 2 claws) or –1 melee (1d6–1, shortsword) or +4 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ great ally, low-light vision, mimicry, trapfinding; AL CE; SV Fort –1, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14; *Monster Manual III* 87.

Skills: Bluff +6, Disable Device +5, Disguise +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +7, Search +3, Sleight of Hand +5, Spot +3, Tumble +5.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

Languages: Auran, Common, Kenku.

Great Ally (Ex): When a kenku is successfully aided on a skill check or attack roll by an ally, or when aiding another, the kenku applies or gains a +3 bonus on its check or attack roll (instead of the normal +2 bonus). A kenku gains a +4 bonus on attack rolls against an opponent flanked by an ally (instead of the normal +2 bonus).



Mimicry (Ex): A kenku can perfectly mimic familiar sounds, voices, and accents. This ability does not enable the kenku to speak languages it can't normally speak. To duplicate a specific individual's voice, a kenku makes a Bluff check; a listener familiar with the voice being imitated must succeed on an opposed Sense Motive check to discern that the voice isn't genuine.

Possessions: Leather armor, buckler, short sword, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, silver unholy symbol of Pazuzu worth 25 gp, pouch containing 5 small pearls worth 10 gp each and 20 gp in assorted shiny trinkets and sparkly bits.

Assassin vine: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 20.

Tactics: Allow the PCs to make Listen and Spot checks to notice the silent and hiding kenku as they move into position. Once the PCs near the ambush point, the closest kenku uses its mimicry to attract the PCs' attention; if the PCs have been talking, the kenku tries to mimic one of the PCs, claiming to be the "real" PC tied up behind a tree, and warning the rest of the group that the PC in the group is an imposter. Otherwise, the kenku mimics the voice of a young crying child. They hope to split the party up so they can attack with surprise.

The three kenku near the road leap out to attack the first person to come within melee reach. Two of these kenku try to flank the PC while the third uses aid another to aid one of the their attack rolls. At the same moment, the kenku in the surrounding hills prepare actions to open fire on anyone who tries to cast spells or comes to aid the ambushed PC.

The kenku are fanatic, and fight to the death, although if the PCs manage to beat them down to one or two, the surviving kenku might try to lure the PCs in reach of the assassin vine by pretending to flee.

The Forsaken Arch

The blue-green water of the sea crashes against the rocks in a flurry of foam and mist in this hauntingly beautiful cove. Thick stands of brush guard the uplands to the north and south, and here and there jagged rocks protrude

from the waves, but the predominant feature offshore is an ominous arch of dark rock. This granite outcropping of two stone columns (each roughly 100 feet in diameter) supports a thick arch of rock approximately 150 feet above the ocean's surface. Several unusually large dark birds perch on top of the arch, their shrill cries competing with the surf for dominance over the scene.

The Forsaken Arch is a natural geological feature shaped by the surf over the ages, as the waves wore away at the sandstone around the granite arch. Centuries ago, a tribe of kuo-toa came upon the arch and made it their home. They expanded the natural caves in the arch, but they died soon thereafter from a virulent plague. For hundreds of years, the chambers in the arch stood empty. Several years ago a great sea cat chose one of the caves as its lair—the creature lives here still, along with its pride. Intelligent custodians recently claimed the Forsaken Arch as a home—a murder of kenku cultists of Pazuzu forced to flee their home city after their machinations were discovered. After claiming the arch, hiring an ogre mage and his favored bodyguard for additional muscle, and befriending the sea cat and its pride, the cultists finally turned their attentions outward toward Shoalbury, hoping to rebuild their treasure stores.

The interior rooms are a bit drafty, with numerous narrow ventilation shafts serving to circulate the air. This also makes the air inside the complex rather damp, and in many places algae and lichens grow on the walls. Sunlight filters in through these vents as well, but most rooms inside are lit by one or two everburning torches.

1. The Sandbar (EL 8)

A wide sandbar extends from the beach out to the stone arch, its length strewn with seashells and bits of coral.

The sandbar connects the beach to the arch. Only a foot or two of water covers it during low tide, at which time it's possible to wade out to area **1**. At high tide, several feet of turbulent surf cover the sandbar, necessitating DC 15 Swim checks.

Creatures: The approach to the Forsaken Arch is not unguarded. After the PCs get halfway out to the arch, one of the sea cats that lurks in the area notices and swims up to attack the intruders. This sea cat, like the others in the area, recognizes kenku and ogres as allies and does not attack them, nor does it attack characters successfully disguised as kenku or ogre magi.

The primary guardians of the area, though, are the birds that perch atop the Forsaken Arch. These dangerous avians are in fact advanced fiendish eagles loyal to Pazuzu and his cultists. The birds watch anyone on the beach with their beady dark eyes, and if anyone tries to approach the arch, the fiendish eagles swoop down to attack.

Sea cat: hp 51; *Monster Manual* 220.

Advanced fiendish eagles (8): CR 2; Medium magical beast; HD 3d8+6; hp 19 each; Init +1; Spd 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, talon); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, 2 talons) and –1 melee (1d6+1, bite); SA smite good 1/day (+3 damage); SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire 5, spell resistance 8; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 6; *Monster Manual* 272.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +13.

Feats: Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (talon).

Languages: Abyssal.

2. Entrance

A sandy beach extends into the dark maw of a cave entrance on the inner side of the northern arch. Each wave that courses through the arch is answered with splashing echoes from within the cave as the water froths and roils.

The bandit leader Shambus places an extended *alarm* spell in this cave daily, along with the one he maintains further south along the trail to the hideout. The bandits make use of the password ("Sarakha," which is kenku for "victory") to move through this area without triggering the *alarm*. The *alarm* is a mental alarm that only Shambus can hear.

3. Water Spouts (EL 1)

The cavern narrows down to a short curved tunnel, but a pair of tide pools that reach nearly wall to wall make passage through the cavern rather difficult. The water in each pool surges and sloshes about, and the rocky depths display a riot of colorful anemones and tangled fronds of seaweed.

The gap between the edges of these pools and the cave wall is about a foot wide, but the ledges are slimy and slippery. Navigating by one of the pools requires a DC 12 Balance check—failure by 5 or more indicates the character has fallen into one of the 10-foot-deep pools. Alternately, a character could jump over the pool, or clamber along the walls with a successful DC 20 Climb check.

Each time a wave hits the shore outside, the water is forced up through submerged channels and out through these tide pools in a violent burst of spray. The pools explode with water once every 5 rounds, the runoff draining down into area **2**. Any creature within 5 feet of a pool when the water spouts must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be knocked prone. Characters inside a pool at this time take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage (DC 15 Reflex save halves) from being buffeted by the water.

For a few hours during low tide, the water level in these pools drops low enough that the wave action doesn't result in water spray. The bandits take advantage of these lulls to stage raids, using portable bridges from area **4** to lead out their mounts.

Development: If the complex is on alert, the denizens of area **4** have prepared actions to open fire on any intruders they see trying to navigate the pool closest to this room.

4. Stables (EL 5)

The twenty-foot-high ceiling of this room is supported by several large rock columns

that have been carved to resemble clouds of fish swimming up through a watery vortex; each pillar also bears a single flickering torch in a sconce. A large stack of soggy-looking firewood lies in a heap along the southern wall, and a closed double door sits in the north. The room smells wretched—a sickening combination of rotting seaweed, brine, and dung.

Creatures: This large room serves as a stable for the bandits' horses. Five heavy warhorses are kept stabled here against the west wall. Despite the somewhat unconventional stabling, these horses are quite well trained by the bandits and are remarkably calm. The kenku use the horses to stage their raids, usually riding two to a horse, allowing them to strike with surprising speed. The horses are accustomed to walking across the water with *water walk* spells cast by Artimus, a trait that made them especially useful in staging the latest pearl raid against the fishing boat. The horses won't attack the PCs unless they try to touch them or mount them, at which point they raise a terrible racket and lash out with bites and hooves.

If the complex is on alert, four kenku sneaks from area **8** lie in wait here. They have prepared actions to use their shortbows against anyone they see trying to navigate the northern tide pool. If the PCs make it into the room, the kenku retreat to area **5** to join the ogre there in defending the area.

Kenku sneaks, rogue 1 (4): hp 5 each; see page 50.

Heavy warhorses (5): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 273.

5. Storage (EL 7)

This large alcove is mostly filled with crates of all sizes and dimensions, many of which have been stacked into a large wall that nearly closes off the alcove. Several half-devoured horse and human carcasses hang from chains driven into the ceiling here. None of the bodies have eyes.

This alcove serves as the primary storage area for the bandits. The crates contain many supplies that the bandits have scavenged from the various pearl caravans they've ambushed, including food, blankets, lumber, tools, extra saddles, and other mundane items.

Creatures: Tolak, an ogre barbarian, lives in this alcove. His master is an ogre mage named Deldegor, a cruel taskmaster who forced Tolak to relocate here after one of his "fits of anger" resulted in a pile of broken zombies. Tolak resents his relocation to this area, but is far too afraid of Deldegor's magic to argue against it.

Tolak, male ogre barbarian 4: hp 79; *Monster Manual* 199.

Tactics: If he knows the PCs are in the area, Tolak observes the action in area **4** from behind the crates, peering through cracks between the stacked containers. He prepares an action to push the wall of crates over on anyone who comes within 10 feet of them. A successful DC 15 Reflex save allows a character to escape with only 2d6 points of damage from the heavy crates, but if the save is failed the crates also knock the character prone and pin him until a successful DC 16 Strength check frees him. Tolak rages and uses his *+1 greatclub* to crush anyone who tries to engage him in melee, otherwise he throws javelins and taunts at the enemy. He fights to the death, hoping to impress Deldegor with his bravery and earn his way back into guard duty in area **13**.

6. Ventilation Shafts

Many of these narrow shafts provide the rooms in the Forsaken Arch with ventilation, shafts for smoke from cooking fires, and (in the case of those angled down) waste disposal. Each of these shafts is only 4 to 6 inches wide. A Diminutive or Fine creature can navigate them easily, and a Tiny creature can do so with a DC 30 Escape Artist check; they are impassable to larger creatures.

7. Double Door

Entry into area **8** is barred by a pair of massive iron and wood doors that seem almost new. Nevertheless, the constant damp of these chambers makes the massive doors stick; as a result, the bandits tend to leave them ajar. If the bandits are on alert, the doors are not only closed but locked.

Double door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 25.

8. Barracks (EL 8 or 10)

A large wooden table sits in the middle of this room, wedged between a pair of vertical rock columns carved to resemble swarms of squid and fish swimming in a vortex. Several ventilation holes line the walls, and to the east a stone fireplace looms. Nearby, a set of large shelves holds sundry provisions and utensils. The north and south walls are strewn with large nest-like beds, each cluttered with a large amount of sparkly bits of metal and glittering crystals. A wall to the northwest bears an intricate carving of swarms of fish feeding on a screaming humanoid figure. The air is damp, and carries with it an unsettling odor of mildew and bird.

Creatures: This room serves as the barracks for the kenku bandits. The alcove to the left is their latrine, the floor sloping toward a drainage hole. The kenku number thirteen: ten kenku sneaks (which may have been slain in the ambush to the west), two kenku cutthroats that serve as sub-commanders, and the bandit leader, a kenku bard named Shambus.

The number of kenku bandits the PCs encounter here depends on how discreet they have been in exploring the caves. If the PCs made it into area **4** without alerting the bandits, all thirteen are encountered here. If the PCs alerted the base, then four of the kenku sneaks were likely encountered in area **4** and won't be found here. If the PCs triggered the alarm further south on the road, Shambus sent all the kenku sneaks out to ambush the PCs on the road. If the PCs killed all the kenku there, then only Shambus and the two cutthroats are left to defend this room. Likewise, if the PCs triggered the southern alarm but avoided the roadside ambush, they'll only have to cope with the three bandit leaders, although there is a good chance the kenku sneaks from the ambush will return to the Forsaken Arch at some point.

THE FORSAKEN ARCH
SAND BAR
N
arch above
up
NORTH COLUMN
SAND BAR
ramp
SOUTH COLUMN
ONE SQUARE: 5 FEET

The kenku spend the majority of their time here, relaxing in conversation, eating, or debauchery. All of the kenku are quite religious, although their veneration of Pazuzu is fueled as much as from fear as it is from respect. They hope that their servitude to the Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms might someday restore their lost ability to fly.

Kenku sneaks, rogue 1 (up to 10): hp 5 each; see page 50.

Kenku cutthroats, rogue 5 (2): CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6+5; hp 22 each; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +7 melee (1d3–1, claw) or +8 melee (1d6, shortsword) or +7 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +7 melee (1d3–1, 2 claws) or +8 melee (1d6, shortsword) or +7 ranged (1d6/×3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, great ally, low-light vision, mimicry, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 13; *Monster Manual III* 87.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +6, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Gather Information +9, Hide +14, Jump +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +12, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +14, Spot +3, Tumble +12.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Auran, Common, Halfling, Kenku.

Possessions: *+1 studded leather armor*, buckler, *+1 short sword*, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, silver unholy symbol of Pazuzu worth 25 gp, pouch containing 10 small pearls worth 20 gp each and 50 gp in assorted shiny trinkets and sparkly bits.

Shambus, male kenku bard 7: CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d6; hp 24; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +7 melee (1d3, claw) or +8 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, *+1 whip*); Full Atk +7 melee (1d3, 2 claws) or +8 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, *+1 whip*); SA *fascinate*, spells, *suggestion*; SQ bardic knowledge +9, bardic music 7/day, countersong, great ally, inspire competence, inspire courage +1, low-light vision, mimicry; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 16; *Monster Manual III* 87.

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +13 (+15 acting), Gather Information +13, Intimidate +15, Hide +14, Jump +2, Move Silently +14, Perform (song) +13, Tumble +12.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Auran, Common, Halfling, Kenku.

Bard Spells Known (3/2/3/0*; caster level 7): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand, message, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*alarm, charm person* (DC 14), *cure light wounds, grease* (DC 14); 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, hold person* (DC 14), *mirror image, whispering wind*; 3rd—*cure serious wounds, phantom steed*.

*Since Shambus casts two *alarms* and one *phantom steed* every day, his spells available are lower than normal.

Possessions: *+1 studded leather armor, +1 buckler, +1 whip, cloak of elvenkind, lesser rod of extend metamagic*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, gold unholy symbol of Pazuzu worth 100 gp, pouch containing 15 small pearls worth 20 gp each and 50 gp in assorted shiny trinkets and sparkly bits.

Tactics: If he has a chance before combat begins, Shambus tries to *fascinate* as many PCs as possible with his bardic music, selecting obvious fighters and rogues as his targets. If one of them fails to resist the effect, he weaves a *suggestion* into the *fascination* that the character go study the carving of the man-eating fish on the wall to the northwest (area **10**)—a character that does so triggers to the Trap there.

Once combat begins, any kenku sneaks present in this room run up to engage intruders in melee or hang back to use their shortbows. The two cutthroats and Shambus hang back, overturning the table and using it as cover once combat begins. The cutthroats attack with shortbows, switching to melee weapons only to protect Shambus. On the first round, Shambus uses inspire courage to grant all of the kenku in the room a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws against charm and fear. The next round, Shambus casts *mirror image*, followed by *hold person* spells. If a PC seems to be doing a lot of damage with a particular weapon, Shambus casts *grease* on the weapon.

The kenku are fanatics, and fight to the death.

9. Fireplace

This massive fireplace is replete with oven-type doors and stovetop. What looks like a bloody horse's leg rests impaled upon a spit nearby, ready for cooking, yet no fire is lit. A hood covering the stove directs smoke out through a vent above the fireplace.

The rogues generally burn their fires late at night to reduce the chance of anyone seeing the smoke rising from the vent.

Treasure: A DC 25 Search check of the ashes under the fireplace reveals a *ring of feather falling* that had been swallowed by a greedy pirate only a few hours before he was caught by the kenku and subsequently roasted in this fire several months ago.

10. Disposal Pit (EL 7)

A shabby wool blanket, its shag speckled with mildew and mold, sits on the floor here before an intricate carving of a school of fanged fish devouring a hapless sailor.

The wall carving is a remnant of the Arch's earliest denizens. Its workmanship is quite fine, but hides no secrets. The wool blanket is another story entirely; anyone who stands upon it is exposed to the pit trap beneath it.

Creatures: The small cave to the northwest is the lair of an aquatic variant of the shambling mound. Shambus lured this creature, which is composed mainly of seaweed and kelp, into this cave several weeks ago, and it is quite happy with its new lair. It feeds upon the carcasses or other garbage tossed down the chute by the kenku—anyone who falls into its cave is fit for eating as well.

Aquatic shambling mound: Large plant (aquatic); hp 60; *Monster Manual* 222.

Trap: Anyone who stands on the rug causes the trapdoor under it to swing open,

dumping rug and victim into a chute that leads to the shambling mound's lair.

Chute trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; chute deposits victim in submerged cave to the northeast (2d6 nonlethal, fall); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

11. Secret Door

This door consists of a well-balanced slab of stone set into the wall, matched perfectly to avoid detection without a successful DC 25 Search check.

12. Stairway (EL 4)

The long steps curve upward approximately 20 feet in elevation to area **13**.

Trap: About half-way up the stairs, Artimus has placed a *glyph of warding* that is triggered if anyone non-evil passes over it. The glyph is quite loud when triggered, and its detonation certainly alerts the occupants of area **13** that trouble is coming up.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 9th-level cleric, 4d8 sonic, DC 17 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

13. The Prison (EL 8)

The walls of this long room are lined with writhing, groaning humanoid bodies that hang from their arms by manacles. Bones litter the floor near the walls and various dilapidated instruments of torture occupy the space between the three stony pillars of carved fish that rise up to support the roof. A large hammock hangs between two of these pillars.

Creatures: The humanoid figures hanging from manacles are zombies created from the bodies of captured villagers. There are ten zombies in all, and all of them are eyeless and blind. Artimus Fisk created the zombies using *animate dead* spells, but has no real use for them yet and so hung them here for the amusement of the room's occupant.

The only living creature in this room is Deldegor, an ogre mage ally of Artimus's. Deldegor agreed to join up with the cultists when he was promised a share of the pearls the cultists planned to steal. His job is to provide additional support on the raids; his ability to cast *sleep* has been a key factor in the swift and deadly nature of the ambushes. Deldegor finds the zombies' moaning strangely soothing, and enjoys their presence here.

Deldegor, male ogre mage: hp 37; *Monster Manual* 200.

Human zombies: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 266.

Tactics: If Deldegor heard the trap in area **12**, or otherwise knows the PCs are nearby, he becomes invisible and hovers near the ceiling above the southern end of the room, preparing a *cone of cold* once at least four targets are in range. If he's brought below 15 hit points, he flees to area **24** to alert Artimus to the danger.

Treasure: Deldegor keeps a large pouch of pearls at his side at all times—payment for services rendered. The pouch contains 74 pearls worth 100 gp apiece.

14. Trapped Passage (EL 4)

Trap: This section of hallway is rigged to drop open when a creature of Small or larger size walks over it. Any creature that falls into this pit tumbles down a short slope and then falls 50 feet into the 10-foot-deep water below.

Chute trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; chute drops victim into ocean (2d3 nonlethal plus 1d6 lethal at high tide or 5d6 lethal at low tide, fall); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

15. Hidden Mephits (EL 7)

This tunnel passes through the central mass of the Forsaken Arch, connecting the northeast complex to the southwest one. About halfway through this tunnel, an *illusory wall* (caster level 10) in the floor hides an open shaft. This shaft descends 40 feet, ending at a cleverly hidden trapdoor that opens onto the underside of the Forsaken Arch. A DC 25 Search check reveals this secret trapdoor.

A character who doesn't notice the danger and walks into the illusory floor can avoid a nasty fall with a successful DC 20 Reflex save. A falling character lands on the closed trapdoor, which opens on its own if more than 200 pounds of weight is placed upon it. A fall from the trap door results in a 100-foot fall into the shallow water of the sandbar below. At high tide, this fall only inflicts 2d3 nonlethal plus 6d6 lethal damage, but at low tide the fall deals the full 10d6 damage.

Creatures: A gang of four particularly cruel and sadistic air mephitis recently recruited as allies by Artimus dwell on the ledges of this shaft. These mephits have been promised lucrative roles in the cult once they rebuild their funds. For now, they serve as somewhat surly guardians of this passageway. The mephits know about the trapdoor below.

Air mephits (4): hp 13; AL CE; *Monster Manual* 181.

Tactics: When the mephits hear activity in the tunnel above, they try to summon more mephits to bolster their number and wait for someone to fall into the shaft. While the PCs fight, the original mephits activate their *blur* spells and then flap up to aid their summoned minions. A mephit reduced to fewer than 5 hit points panics and tries to escape down into the shaft and outside.

16. Secret Door

The secret door to the northwest was once quite well hidden but time and erosion have been less kind to it than the other doors in the complex. A successful DC 15 Search check is all that's needed to notice it.

17. Narrow Hallway

The corridor narrows here, to a width of little more than three feet. Passage through the tunnel is made even more difficult due to a series of badly rusted metal poles that run its length. The passage itself is sloped sharply downward.

This narrow passageway was originally intended as a "feeding chute" for the creatures the original inhabitants kept in area **18**; the bars prevented the denizens within from wandering into the rest of the complex. A Small creature can wriggle through this passageway with a successful DC 20 Escape

Artist check; Medium creatures can do so with a DC 30 Escape Artist check, and larger creatures cannot pass through the tunnel at all.

18. Sea Cat Lair (EL 8)

Several huge stone columns support the domed roof of this huge cavern, which is lit naturally by a few large tunnels on the left and right that curve steeply up toward openings above. The majority of the cave floor is a large churning tide pool, its depths a riot of color in the form of anemones, urchins, and writhing forests of seaweed. The rhythmic surging of waves comes from around the southern corner where a submerged tunnel curves toward the sea. Partially submerged in the pool to the east is the long dead shell and skeleton of a massive draconic turtle.

Three of the openings into this cavern open to the outside world high up on top of the Forsaken Arch. Clambering along these tunnels requires a DC 15 Climb check, and at the end they simply open up about 100 feet above the surface of the large tide pool below. Two other openings (both in the west wall of the cave) open at a height of about 50 feet above the pool's surface. Pazuzu cultists use the southernmost of these passageways to dispose of bodies—the sea cats are only too happy to feed on those that enter this room via this manner.

Creatures: Once the home of a surly dragon turtle kept by the kuo-toa, this pool is now the lair of a pride of sea cats led by a particularly large and grizzled sire. This ancient beast spends most of its time in this cavern now, while the rest of its pride lurks in area **19**.

Advanced sea cat: CR 8; Huge magical beast; HD 12d10+72; hp 138; Init +0; Spd 10 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +29; Atk +20 melee (1d8+9/19–20, claw); Full Atk +20 melee (1d8+9/19–20, 2 claws) and +14 melee (2d6+4, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA rend 3d6+13; SQ darkvision 60 ft., hold breath, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 28, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 10; *Monster Manual* 220.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8, Swim +22.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Improved Critical (claw), Iron Will, Weapon Focus (claw).

Tactics: The sea cat waits for someone to enter the tide pool before lunging out of the shelter of the dragon turtle's shell to attack. It focuses its wrath on one target at a time, and its terrible roars alert the rest of its pride in area **19**. The sea cat fights to the death to defend its lair.

19. Nursery (EL 6)

This partially submerged cave is lit by a nearly vertical shaft that leads up and out to the southeast. A narrow beach lines the wall below the shaft.

Creatures: Two sea cats lurk in this cave, tending to a brood of six non-combatant young. If they hear the sea cat in area **18** roar, they prepare actions to lunge at anyone who dares intrude upon their nursery.

Sea cats (2): hp 51 each; *Monster Manual* 220.

20. Exit Tunnel

Much of this tunnel's length, from the entrance into area **18** and **19** to the section that curves up back to the north, is submerged. The rushing waters make movement difficult for an untrained swimmer—navigating the tunnel requires a DC 15 Swim check.

21. Water Spouts (EL 1)

This section of tunnel rises up out of the water, ending at a secluded shelf that sits only a few feet above the high-tide mark facing out to sea. Three water spouts identical to those in area **3** are located just within the tunnel's first curve. Nevertheless, characters canny enough to scout out the far side of the Forsaken Arch can use this passage to enter the complex without having to immediately deal with the bandits.

22. Sacred Tunnel (EL 8)

Creature: This is the primary approach to the temple of Pazuzu, and as such, Artimus Fisk has taken the time to infest the hall with swarms of dangerous creatures he's imported at great expense. The ceiling of this tunnel writhes with swarms of rapture locusts, dark green insects with prismatic wings and eyes. Using forbidden rituals sacred to Pazuzu, Fisk has magically enhanced these locusts, transforming them into fiendish creatures. Imbued with enough intelligence to judge friend from foe, the locusts remain calm unless an intruder enters this passageway. In such an event, the locusts boil into a swarm around the intruders. The low drone created by the swarm is enough to alert Artimus in area **24** that trouble is on the way.

Fiendish rapture locust swarm: CR 8; Fine magical beast (swarm); HD 10d8+20; hp 65; Init +6; Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect); AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7; Grp —; Atk or Full Atk swarm (2d6); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA distraction (DC 17), hypnotic pattern, rapture, smite good 1/day (+10 damage); SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, resistance to cold and fire 10, spell resistance 15, swarm traits, vermin traits; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 1, Dex 14, Con 14, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 170.

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +15.

Feats: Ability Focus (rapture), Alertness, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

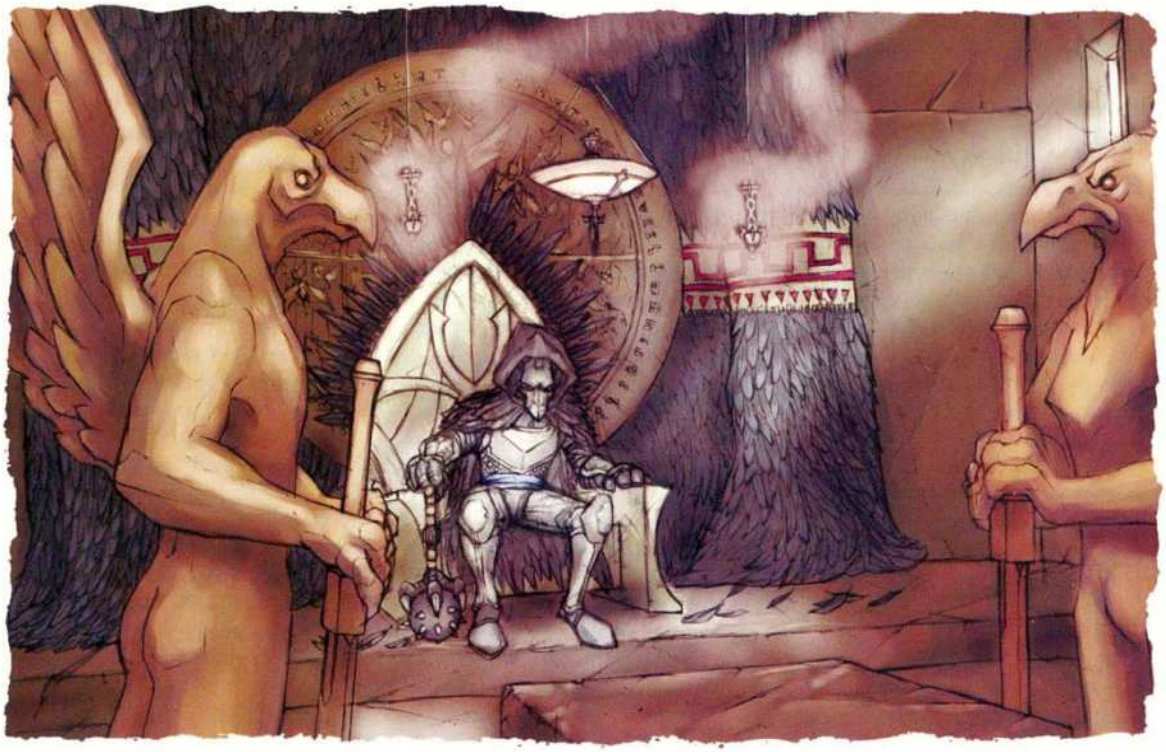
Hypnotic Pattern (Su): Anyone looking at a swarm of rapture locusts is affected as if by a *hypnotic pattern* spell (caster level 6). A DC 15 Will save resists this mind-affecting ability.

Rapture (Su): Any nonmindless creature that takes damage from a rapture locust swarm must make a DC 20 Will save or take no action for 1 full round. This is a mind affecting ability. Enraptured creatures are not distracted by the swarm's attack, since they don't even realize they're being harmed, but those that succeed on the save are distracted.

23. Temple Entrance (EL 7)

The passageway ends at a gleaming marble door decorated with a depiction of a fish head. The fish's two eyes protrude disturbingly from the rest of the carving.

Trap: The actual entrance to the temple is not beyond the door, but to the south.



If the right eye is pressed twice and then the left eye pressed twice, the 10-foot-square area to the west of the door gently grinds down, lowering 20 feet and allowing entry into area **24**. The floor remains lowered for one minute, after which it rises back up.

Any other button combination, or any attempt to open or destroy the door triggers a horrifying trap. Rather than lowering gently, the floor in the 10-foot area west of the door pitches downward violently, dumping everyone in this area into a steep chute. The walls and floor of this chute are studded with serrated spikes that cut and slice away at anything tumbling down; a falling character is "attacked" by 1d6 of these blades before falling 50 feet into area **18**.

Razorblade chute: CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; chute deposits victim in submerged cave to the northeast (2d3 nonlethal plus 1d6 lethal, fall); serrated spikes (Atk +12 melee, 1d6 blades per target for 1d6+4 each); multiple targets (all creatures in a 10-foot square); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

24. Temple of Pazuzu (EL 9)

The polished rock walls of this large room glisten brightly. Four ornate columns arrayed symmetrically around an altar at the center of the room support a ceiling pierced by several narrow skylights. In each corner of the room, large statues of a humanoid figure stand sentinel over the chamber. Each statue depicts an imposing, well-proportioned man with the talons of a hawk, the face of a demonic needle-toothed bird, and four large feathered wings on his back. An impressive throne to the south has a back adorned with a halo of razor-edged metallic feathers.

Once the main temple of a now forgotten minor kuo-toa deity, this unholy shrine is now dedicated to the demon Pazuzu, the Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms. Twice a month, the bandits, mephits, and ogres gather here to take part in a vile and unholy ritual, during which their religious leader sacrifices a living humanoid by plucking out its tongue and eyes, flensing the flesh with severed bird talons, and finally discarding the still living body down the chute in area **25**.

A lever in the north wall controls the raising and lowering of the northern block of stone in area **23**, allowing those in this room to exit to the north with ease.

Creature: The leader of this cult is a human man named Artimus Fisk, a long-time devotee to the demon prince Pazuzu. His cult once flourished in the underbelly of a large city to the north, but when the cult was exposed and its leaders slain, Artimus and a loyal band of kenku from the cult managed to escape. Once merely a minion, Artimus found himself the leader of this band, and further found that he enjoyed the power. His current plans are to bleed the village of Shoalbury dry, force its citizens to abandon their homes, and then use

the ghost town as a base of operations to rebuild his cult.

Artimus Fisk spends much of his time in this chamber, offering prayers to Pazuzu, creating magic items, and designing new traps. If the PCs reach the temple without alerting him, they'll find the vile cleric doing just that. Otherwise, Fisk has prepared as detailed below in the Tactics section.

Artimus Fisk, male human cleric 9: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8+9; hp 49; Init +0; Spd 20 feet; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4, *+2 heavy mace*) or +7 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+4, *+2 heavy mace*) or +7/+2 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells; SQ rebuke undead; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +13, Craft (trapmaking) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Spellcraft +13.

Feats: Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Rapid Reload (light crossbow), Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Languages: Common, Kenku.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 9): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance* (2), *light* (2); 1st—*command* (DC 15), *cure light wounds* (3), *obscuring mist*[D], *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *invisibility*[D], *silence* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon* (+10 melee); 3rd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *gaseous form*[D], *stone shape* (2), *water walk*; 4th—*air walk*, *confusion*[D] (DC 18), *giant vermin*, *summon monster IV*; 5th—*control winds*[D] (DC 19), *insect plague*.

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Air (turn or destroy earth creatures 4/day) and Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: *+1 chainmail*, *+1 heavy steel shield*, *+2 heavy mace*, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, *cloak of resistance +2*, *periapt of Wisdom +2*, *wand of stone shape* (11 charges), 4 *potions of fly*, ceremonial wood and pearl mask worth 800 gp, pearl necklace worth 350 gp, gold armbands worth 200 gp, gold unholy symbol of Pazuzu worth 250 gp.

Tactics: If the PCs reach Artimus here, he knows they're dangerous. If any of his minions have retreated here from earlier encounters, he commands them to engage the PCs in melee. His first act in combat is to cast *giant vermin* to create two Medium monstrous scorpions, followed by *insect plague*. He uses these spells to create a barrier between himself and the PCs in an attempt to give himself time to cast his defensive and offensive spells. If brought below 15 hit points, he tries to escape into area **28** (preferably after casting *obscuring mist* or *invisibility* to expedite his retreat). If vanquished, Artimus uses his last breath in an attempt to call upon Pazuzu's aid, but fortunately for the PCs, Pazuzu does not reward failures.

25. Sacrifice Chute

This large secret door consists of a slab of stone set into the walls that is activated by a hidden lever located in the wall adjacent to the statue at the southeast corner of the throne room. A successful DC 20 Search check uncovers the lever. When the lever is pushed up, a set of pulleys and weights lifts this stone slab, revealing a steep ramp that drops down into area **18**. Pulling the lever down lowers the slab back into place.

26. Secret Door (EL 6)

This secret door can be discovered with a successful DC 20 search check, although anyone who tries to open it unleashes a potent magical trap built recently by Artimus.

Trap: Any attempt to open this door or to destroy it causes the door's surface to writhe and undulate most terribly. An instant later, a powerful gout of three locust swarms erupts from the door. Any creature within 5 feet of the door must make a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone. The locust swarms fill up an area around the secret door (but do not move into area **27** if the door is opened), attacking any nonevil creatures they find.

Swarmspewing door: CR 6; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*insect plague*, 9th-level cleric); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Locust swarm (3): hp 21; *Monster Manual* 239.

27. Grotto (EL 4)

This low-ceilinged room has been crudely carved from the surrounding rock. The floor is uneven, and the walls are lined with shelves of wood. A tapestry depicting an eagle-headed man with four wings perched on a huge bird's talon hangs on the wall to the west, and a simple cot heaped with blankets and pillows sits to the east next to a desk and chair.

Artimus created this room to serve as a hidden treasury to store the pearls his bandits have stolen from Shoalbury. The room also serves Artimus as a bedroom and study. The desk is cluttered with half-finished trap designs, scribbled prayers to Pazuzu, and notes on his plans for Shoalbury once its residents are either driven away or murdered by his cultists.

A keen eye (DC 30 Spot check) or a detailed search (DC 25 Search check) of the wall directly south of the northern secret door reveals a section of wall that seems strangely smooth and glossy. A DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check reveals that this section of wall may have been shaped by magic, while a DC 23 Spellcraft check reveals that the wall has been worked with *stone shape*. Finally, a *detect magic* spell reveals several magic auras embedded about 10 inches into the wall. Artimus uses *stone shape* to open and close a section of wall here, hiding a large trunk filled with expensive supplies as well as all of the pearls the bandits have stolen from Shoalbury in the wall. Without magic, the PCs will need to resort to hacking through the stone wall with picks or other tools.

Trap: Artimus has placed a *glyph of warding* on the trunk; anyone else who tries to open the chest triggers the trap.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 9th-level cleric, 4d8 sonic, DC 17 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Treasure: The trunk contains fifteen bags of pearls. Only four of these bags contain high-quality pearls (each of which holds 250 pearls worth 100 gp each). The other eleven bags each hold

250 pearls worth 10 gp each. A separate sack contains 1,800 sp and 240 gp. A small silver and oak coffer (itself worth 200 gp) in the trunk holds even more treasure, including five huge pearls worth 2,000 gp each, 20 large pearls worth 500 gp each, a *potion of blur*, three *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *ring of climbing*, and a scroll of *hold person*, *wall of fire*, *charm monster*, and *dispel magic* (caster level 7).

28. Escape Tunnel

Hidden behind the tapestry of Pazuzu is a crude secret door (DC 18 Search check to discover). The tunnel beyond the door ends at a thin stone wall; from the outside, only close examination and a successful DC 23 Spellcraft check reveals that this section of the Arch has been magically shaped. When he uses this entrance, Artimus simply casts *stone shape* to open up the wall or to close it behind him.

Concluding the Adventure

With the defeat of the bandits and the revelation that Seacrust has betrayed Shoalbury, the villagers hail the PCs as heroes. In addition to honoring any monetary awards promised them earlier, the Collective thanks the PCs by holding a village-wide banquet in their honor. The PCs are proclaimed "heroes of Shoalbury" and are considered true friends by the citizens.

If he survives, the villagers demand Seacrust's public execution. The PCs can try to argue the villagers out of their bloodlust, but even if they do, Seacrust's guilt over his betrayal eventually overwhelms him and he takes his own life. Only devoted dedication and constant support over the next several months save him from this doom, but a PC who saves him should be awarded with a CR 7 experience award. Seacrust might even become an ally or cohort.

Finally, although this particular cult of Pazuzu might have been vanquished, other cults exist in the hidden corners of the world. If any of the PCs have learned too much about this cult, they have doubtless discovered that Pazuzu is known to answer summons from those who don't worship him. Will the PCs be tempted to call upon the Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms at some date in the future? And if they do... will they be able to resist following in Seacrust's doomed path?

Tim Haener, 38, lives in Boise, Idaho and works as a consulting civil engineer. He has been playing D&D off and on since high school and also writes in his spare time, completing his first fantasy novel, The Wielder, *last year. Tim and his wife, Chris, have two daughters, ages 7 and 3. The oldest, Maggie, loves to page through the* Monster Manual *and learn about the creatures that inhabit the D&D world.*

Scaling the Adventure

"The Forsaken Arch" is designed for a group of four 7th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 6th-level characters or 8th–9th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 7. Specific changes to the adventure include:

6th-Level Characters: Remove the trap from the dock leading to Seacrust's bungalow, and play Seacrust himself as a little crazier and a little less tactical; it's okay to have him "waste" rounds taunting the PCs or acting insane. Reduce the number of kenku sneaks in the ambush by 2–3, and the number of advanced fiendish eagles in area **1** by a similar amount. Reduce the Search and Disable Device DCs for all traps by 1. Replace Deldegor with an 5th-level ogre sorcerer. Reduce the advanced sea cat's Hit Dice from 12 to 9 (whcih also reduces his size to Large). Replace the fiendish rapture locust swarm in area **22** with two normal locust swarms.

8th–9th–Level Characters: Make the advanced fiendish eagles into advanced half-fiend eagles. Replace the heavy warhorses in area **4** with worgs and have them take a more active role in combat. Replace the shambling mound in area **10** with a giant octopus. Increase the Search and Disable Device DCs for all traps by 1–2. Give Deldegor 2–4 levels of fighter, and advance the air mephits in area **15** by 3 Hit Dice. Increase the advanced sea cat to 15 or 18 Hit Dice. In addition to increasing his level appropriately, give Artimus Fisk some sort of monstrous minion, like a vrock or a 12-Hit Die half-fiend giant wasp. If you have access to *Dragon* #329, you can even have an aspect of Pazuzu arrive to aid Artimus Fisk if things turn grim for the cultist.

THE PORTENT

by Peter Bergting

THE SIGNS NEVER LIE! SOMETHING EVIL IS COMING.
THE LITTLE ONES MUST BE WARNED!
SOMETHING SO EVIL IT CANNOT BE PUT INTO WORDS!
I'M AFRAID IT CAN INDEED BE PUT INTO WORDS...
IT'S CALLED A GOBLIN SPECIAL WITH EXTRA EVERYTHING -- LLOYD IS BRANCHING OUT WITH HIS NEW PIZZA DELIVERY SERVICE!
GOBBO
ONE SPECIAL COMING UP!

The Portent ™ ©, '04 BERGTING

Lost Temple Of Demogorgon

By Sean K Reynolds

Illustrations by Chuck Lukacs
and Udon with Jim Zubkavich and Gala Ferriere
Cartography by Chris West
Playtested by Brian Hendley, Dave Maldonado, Terry Spier, and J.E. Sawyer

Any Setting • High-Level (13th–20th) • Dungeon Crawl

His name has inspired fear in legions of heroes, and his cult has lurked in the dismal reaches of the world for countless ages. His minions are savage and feral, his worshipers vile and wretched. He is Demogorgon, and his temples are nightmare realms haunted by primeval menaces and hateful legacies from a time when the world was savage. And now, a vengeful death knight has discovered one of these lost temples—will the PCs aid him in his dark quest for revenge, or will they fall before the awakened host of the Prince of Demons?

"Lost Temple of Demogorgon" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 14th-level characters. Though it is near enough to a major city that the PCs could interrupt the adventure with a quick trip to rest and resupply, the NPCs have simple but ongoing plans that continue whether or not the PCs are there. The adventure is nominally set in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK near the fortified city of Irongate, though you can easily place the Lost Temple in any hilly or mountainous area a few days' travel from a large city or a large dwarven settlement.

This adventure refers often to the demon prince Demogorgon, described in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, and while you may find that book helpful for running this adventure it is not required. Likewise, while one key NPC is a death knight created by the power of Demogorgon as described in "The Death Knights of Oerth," (a two-part article in *DRAGON* #290 and #291) and the additional information in that article may be useful in helping to establish atmosphere, it is not necessary to run the adventure.

Before you run "Lost Temple of Demogorgon," take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the statistics and abilities of the various NPCs and monsters in this adventure. In particular, the troglodyte clerics have many spells available to them and use them to best effect in combat. Their tactics diverse can be a challenge for even an experienced DM (as is the case with any high-level adventure).

Adventure Background

Lord Khayven of Rax, one of fourteen death knights created centuries ago by an artifact of the demon prince Demogorgon, has left the employ of Prince Reydrich of Ahlissa and is seeking a way to return to life. The

death knight served the Archmage of the South Province for several years as a personal enforcer, before the wizard imprisoned him and attempted to use painful interrogation to learn how to create other slavishly loyal death knights. Khayven eventually escaped his master and decided to rid himself of his involuntary undead state once and for all. His efforts to destroy the artifact that created him proved fruitless, so now he searches for ancient sites consecrated to Demogorgon, hoping to find a key to reversing the death knight transformation. Lord Khayven has left a wandering path of violated tombs, dungeons, and temples behind him, each revealing a small clue to his condition and a pointer to another site. Now his journey has brought him to the Iron Hills east of the city of Irongate.

Aeons ago, the world was ruled by an evil and quarrelsome race of demon-worshipping reptilian humanoids similar to modern troglodytes. Most of these creatures were struck mad by their demonic patrons and descended into barbarism, but a few isolated pockets lingered on for a thousand more years, becoming inbred and fanatical in their devotion to their sometimes-neglectful demon princes. One such group lived in a temple near what is now Irongate, and worshipped Demogorgon under the name of Ahmon-Ibor, the Sibilant Beast. This group managed to survive for so long for two reasons. First, they owned a terrible artifact called the *Dread Forge*, which, through the use of the proper evil sacrifices, could be used to craft magic items and awaken evil intelligence in animals. Second, the troglodytes made contact with a large human tribe that lived in the area and forced them to pay tribute.

These humans, a race called the Flan, accepted the reptiles' price for staving off storms and preventing drought, offering up their livestock and children to the trogs for demonic sacrifices and meanwhile praying to Pelor for help. The Flan of these highlands tolerated the demon-trogs' cruelty for nearly a hundred years until the rise of a human kingdom to the north challenged the reptiles' rule. This new land came to be known for its inestimable monarch, Queen Ehlissa. Her warriors, the puissant Hradikar, posed a threat to the rule of the reptilian overlords. Realizing their numbers were too few to face down the humans, the troglodyte priests sealed the entrance to their temple with a *wall of stone*, covered its presence with a rockfall, and used their knowledge of magic and mummification to put themselves and their awakened dire ape guards into a timeless sleep, hoping that in a later age the humans would fail and the time of the reptile-folk would come again.

Lord Khayven recently found this buried temple and smashed his way through its outer defenses. Finding the hibernating guards and priests, he prodded them with sword and magic in an attempt to wake them, and managed to rouse a lesser priest named Tellax. With this troglodyte's help, the two woke other priests and guardians, though many of them did not survive the great sleep. Lord Khayven has come to believe a priest of Demogorgon, using a Demogorgon-created artifact, can reverse the death knight transformation and make him a living man again. Tellax assures him this is true, but actually harbors doubts about his chance of success. The troglodyte plans to use his "reversal attempts" to siphon power from the death knight and charge up the *Dread Forge* so he and his followers can better arm themselves against the upstart mammals who run over "their" land like rats. Tellax sees his alliance with Lord Khayven as a win-win situation; whether the death knight is made human again or simply dies as a result of the experiment, Tellax and his temple come out ahead.

Tellax sent some of the temple's awakened apes on scouting missions into the surrounding hills to see how things have changed since the age of reptiles. These apes, dressed in ancient armor decorated with demonic symbols, have been noticed by dwarf miners working nearby. The dwarves, mistaking the apes for armored ogres, reported to their superiors in the mining organization, who in turn passed the information on to officials in Irongate.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs begin the adventure in Irongate, or at one of the clanhomes that are part of Dwarfking Holgi Hirsute's Kingdom of the Iron Hills. The people of Irongate have a siege mentality and tend to be slightly distrustful of strangers, fearing saboteurs, spies, and assassins from enemy countries (though they are friendlier to dwarves, given Irongate's alliance with the dwarf kingdom, and gray elves, given their continuing alliance with the elven-ruled mix-race country of Sunndi). The dwarves of Holgi's kingdom are typically dwarven, always anticipating some kind of attack or another but confident they'll have the strength to deal with it. The PCs may have heard rumors of dark creeper battles in the passages below the city and surprise attacks by the Scarlet Brotherhood, and now they learn of these sightings of great armored demon-ogres in the hills.

Though ogres normally would be of little concern to 14th-level PCs, armored ogres in demonic regalia is another story. With directions from the dwarves, the PCs locate the ogre lair and find out the ogres are actually awakened dire apes, their lair is an ancient temple, and the priests are troglodyte demon-worshipers. The PCs investigate the temple interior and confront the trog priests and the death knight. Do they try to help the death knight unwork his curse? Do they put him to the sword knowing he's been a source of evil for almost 400 years? Can they convince him to turn against the troglodytes whose demon-prince made him what he is?

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins when representatives of Irongate or King Holgi contact the PCs about investigating the strange ogres. This representative is either Steren Brass (a messenger working for the Irongate mayor's office) or Kraki Durgard (a young dwarven noble who works for King Holgi) depending

upon the PCs' starting location. The representative carries official documents from his employer indicating the need to find investigators of skill and power sufficient to locate and eliminate a threat to the safety of the people of the region. Once the PCs agree to travel with the messenger, they meet with an agent of Irongate's mayor or the dwarven king, who explains the following points:

- On three different occasions, dwarf miners spotted mysterious ogres in the distance. These encounters all took place in the morning hours before sunrise.
- The ogres wear evil-looking metal armor, though exact details are uncertain because of the poor lighting.
- The first sightings took place about two weeks ago and the others each happened 3–4 days after the previous one. There may have been more sightings since that time, but it takes several days for news to get here from there.
- Normally a small number of ogres wouldn't be a concern, but their caution and heavy armor means something strange is going on.
- Irongate has heard rumors about an upcoming naval offensive by the Scarlet Brotherhood and they don't want to spare any soldiers to investigate these ogres.
- The dwarven kingdom is worrying about an increase in the number of dark ones (dark creepers and dark stalkers) in the deep tunnels under the hills and don't want to divert any of their resources away from defending their holds. They also have to deal with an increase of espionage from agents of the country of Ahlissa to the northeast.

If the PCs agree to get rid of the ogres, the representative agrees to give them an official letter of thanks and 10,000 gp worth of masterwork armor, masterwork weapons, or gemstones crafted by the people of Irongate or the dwarves of the Iron hills (the agent is allowed to negotiate up to 15,000 gp worth of goods but would prefer to keep the cost low). The PCs of course are free to keep whatever riches they claim during their investigation, though if there are any items of historical value, the government insists on the right to claim them and give a reward for their return.

The agent gives them a map of the known roads through the Iron Hills and indicates where to leave the road to investigate the ogre sightings. This location is about a week's travel from Irongate (or four days from the dwarven hold) by foot. From there, the PCs should be able to find the ogres (or at least their tracks—they're not exactly sneaky creatures) and find out where the lair is.

The Iron Hills

This highland is nearly two hundred miles across in some places, and rich in mineral and metal deposits. The Iron Hills belong to a dwarven kingdom, but little of the dwarven civilization is seen aboveground except for a few outposts and small-scale ranching and farming on a few artificially-leveled terraces. An old road runs through the hills from Irongate to the Ahlissan city of Zelradton, though it is used infrequently because of bad blood between the two lands. Other smaller roads used by workers and dwarven crafters lead to the surface entrances of some dwarven mines and outposts, though most dwarves prefer using underground tunnels to travel in their own land.

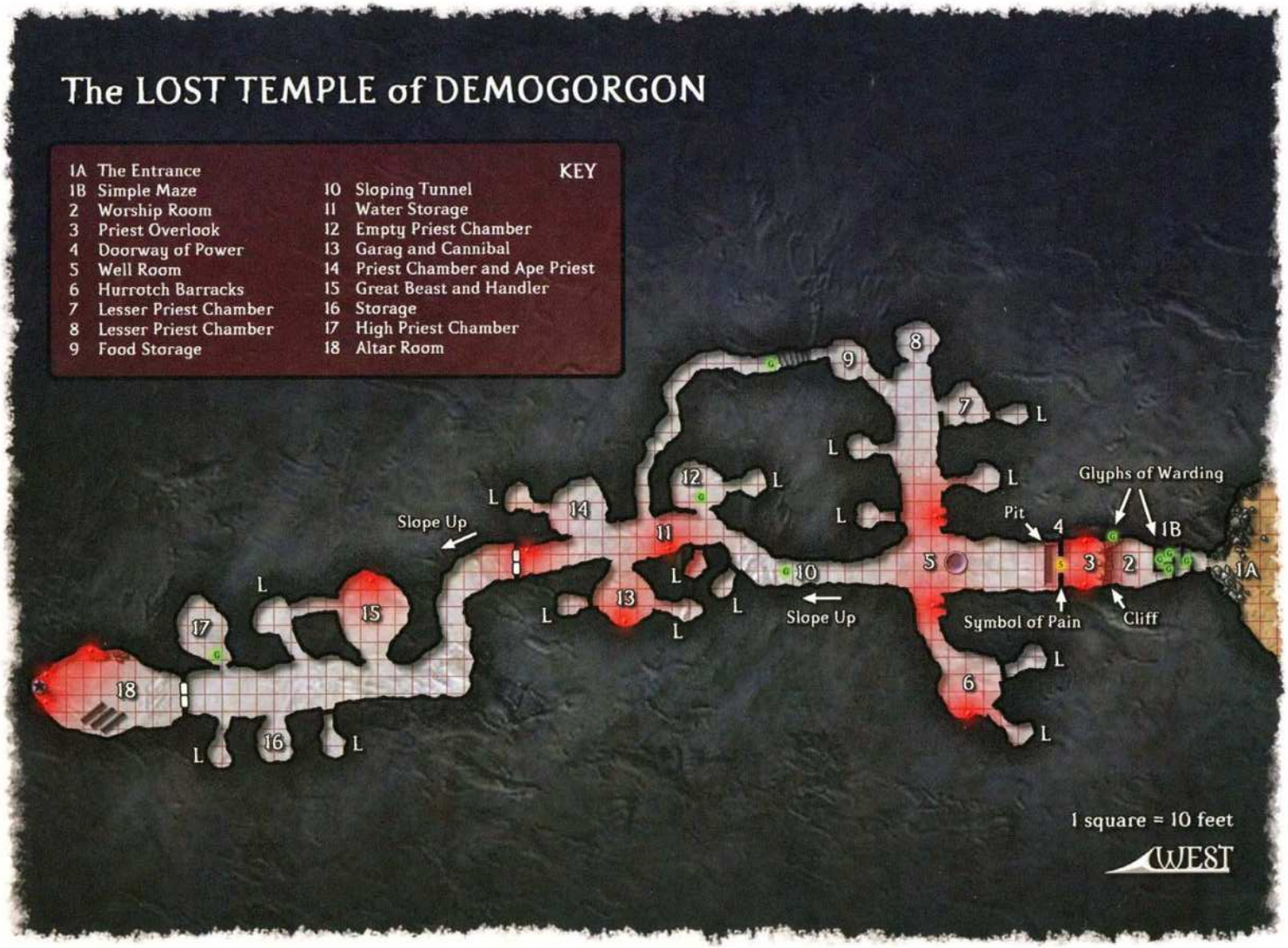
With their map, the PCs should reach the area where the dwarven miners first spotted the ogres with little trouble. PCs with Track who succeed at a Survival check (DC 16) find large barefoot tracks after only one hour of searching. An examination of the tracks reveals that they are odd, in that they indicate a splay-footed creature rather than typical oblong track made by a humanoid or giant. The tracks are at least three days old (and based on how long ago the dwarves saw the ogres here, the creatures must have returned to this point since that initial sighting). Once the tracks are found, the tracker can attempt another Survival check (DC 17) to notice smaller, claw-footed tracks in the same area, possibly by lizardfolk or a similar reptilian humanoid (the tracks belong to the troglodytes traveling with the "ogres." but the trogs' natural hiding ability kept the dwarves from noticing them when the "ogres" were spotted). The tracks are too old to determine if the reptilian tracks were made before, after, or at the same time as the ogre tracks. PCs can follow the tracks to the ogre lair by making 6 successful Survival checks (DC 16), one per hour.

PCs without the Track feat must search for 1d4+2 hours and make a DC 16 Search check to find any tracks. Without the Track feat, the PCs can't notice the deformed shape of the tracks, their age, or the presence of the reptilian tracks. Neither can they determine which way to follow the tracks, but at least they're sure they're in the right area. With the footprints and the locations marked on the map, even PCs without Track can narrow their search area and (after 1d3 days of looking) discover the ogre lair.

Creatures: If the PCs are itching for a fight (or need a stronger hint that something strange is going on), have a group of "ogres" stumble across the PC camp in the early hours of the morning. For this encounter use a hurrotch (see page 73), a lesser trog priest (see page 73), and an awakened dire ape equivalent to the Cannibal (see page 75). Attracted by the smell of fresh prey, the monsters recklessly attack the PCs, not realizing until too late that they're dealing with powerful adventurers. This encounter gives the PCs an up-close look at what they're dealing with.

The Lost Temple

The unworked natural stone walls of the temple can be climbed with a DC 15 Climb check. Ceilings are normally 10 to 15 feet high. As the apes are all natural climbers, they have an easy time using these walls to get around obstacles on the floor, whether natural hazards of the temple or something put in place by the PCs such as a *grease* spell. If you describe combat in a cinematic matter, be sure to have the apes take advantage of the terrain, even if it amounts to no game effect. For example, have an ape climb partway


The LOST TEMPLE of DEMOGORGON
KEY
1A The Entrance
1B Simple Maze
2 Worship Room
3 Priest Overlook
4 Doorway of Power
5 Well Room
6 Hurrotch Barracks
7 Lesser Priest Chamber
8 Lesser Priest Chamber
9 Food Storage
10 Sloping Tunnel
11 Water Storage
12 Empty Priest Chamber
13 Garag and Cannibal
14 Priest Chamber and Ape Priest
15 Great Beast and Handler
16 Storage
17 High Priest Chamber
18 Altar Room
Slope Up
Slope Up
Pit
Glyphs of Warding
Symbol of Pain
Cliff
1 square = 10 feet
WEST

up an adjacent wall, then leap down upon an enemy PC; even if this doesn't cost them an extra action and doesn't give them any modifiers to hit or damage, it reinforces the "apeness" of the opponents.

Much of the temple complex has been modified from its original configuration, either by hewing open additional chambers or walling off sections with *walls of stone*. The troglodyte and ape builders made sure to accommodate the apes' love of climbing by creating rough wall surfaces, so even the areas that are technically hewn stone count as unworked stone for climbing purposes. The map has many small rooms that are completely blocked off by walls and marked by the letter L; these are old latrines that have been walled off to allow the contents to decompose and lose their smell (and given that now they've been closed off for thousands of years, there's no smell left at all). There is nothing of interest in these areas, but they may distract curious PCs, as they are easy to notice (each is a smooth *wall of stone* in the midst of an otherwise rough natural cavern).

Wall of Stone: 2 inches thick, Hardness 8, hp 30 per 5-foot section, Break DC 24.

Temple Denizens

While the troglodytes have superior darkvision (90 ft.), the apes only have low-light vision, so the interior of the temple has a few light sources. The trogs use a variant of the *continual flame* spell (caster level 5, should a PC try to dispel one) to light certain areas with an evil red glow; the center of these light effects are marked on the map. Remember that the apes' low-light vision means that, to them, these spells effectively give double their standard illumination (40-ft. radius clear light, 80-ft. radius shadowy light), and even in the gaps between lights they are familiar enough with their home to pass through those areas safely (such as on the way to an illuminated area) or even attack with ranged weapons at creatures in lighted areas. Certain parts of the temple halls (such as near the troglodyte rooms) are kept dark. Not only does this force some enemies to announce their presence by bringing lights, it lets the trogs attack from darkness with long-range spells, effectively invisible to light-using opponents and PCs with 60-ft. darkvision. Note that PCs targeted by enemy spells at range only know they are under magical attack, not what direction the attack is coming from, so determining the location of their enemies may be difficult.

With their darkvision and reliance upon midnight for their prayers, the troglodytes run the temple on a different time cycle than that used by surface creatures. "Morning" is a couple of hours before midnight, "mid-day" is a few hours after midnight, and "night" (including time for sleeping) starts in the early- to mid-afternoon. Daily spell preparation takes place after midnight prayers, and daily casting of spells occurs immediately after that. Most temple creatures are asleep during their designated sleep hours, though two hurrotch ("ape soldiers") and two lesser priests (in areas **7** and **8**) are always on watch. Add one round to the response time of any sleeping creature. If woken from sleep, a creature that wears armor normally doesn't bother donning it if the temple is attacked, though they may spend one round gathering a melee weapon and shield if they don't believe any of the priests are in immediate mortal danger. Creatures are assumed to always be wearing any equipment that wouldn't hinder their sleep comfort, such as cloaks, rings, and bracers.

Individual members of the temple carry no wealth other than the equipment they use. All other treasure is pooled for the benefit of the temple, and is used primarily for creating magic items with the *Dread Forge* or for spellcasting components. The temple's treasure is listed in the altar room (area **18**). Once the temple becomes fully active, its members might accrue personal treasure, but for now high priest Tellax has insisted they marshal their resources for the greater goal of their survival.

The temple complex is small enough that loud noises in any one area are audible in adjacent areas but large enough that reinforcements from those areas take at least one full round to arrive. This means that once the temple is attacked, the PCs must deal with a series of immediate follow-up encounters. If the PCs are clearly stronger than the temple creatures, the monsters try to fall back to the upper

Restocking the Temple

If PCs attack the temple and then retreat, the trogs do what they can to fortify their defenses. High-level clerics use *planar ally* and similar spells to bring additional guardians and mid-level priests do the same with *lesser planar ally*. If you have access to the *Book of Vile Darkness*, the apelike bar-lgura demons are an appropriate choice and within the HD limit of *lesser planar ally*. The high priest uses *create undead* to create ghouls and ghasts out of the corpses of slain underlings and enemies (ghouls and ghasts made from Large creatures should use the corpse's original hit dice and normal ability score adjustments for a size increase to Large, or refer to *Libris Mortis* for the gravetouched ghoul template, while the remaining priests use *animate dead* to make zombies from the fallen. Priests can use *forbiddance*, *symbol*, or *glyph of warding* spells to add magical wards in key locations. They would use *raise dead* to bring their guardians back to life, but despite the temple's wealth in terms of jewels, they have insufficient diamonds to cast that spell. If their defenses are breached a second time and their enemies retreat again, the surviving priests use *plane shift* at the earliest convenience to retreat with their riches and guardians to Demogorgon's home on the Abyss, from which they can make a foray into a safer place on the Material Plane.

Demontainted Treasure

Most of the armor and weapons used by the villains in this adventure was created by the *Dread Forge*; as a result, these items possess the demontainted quality. A demontainted item is an evil item, and bestows a negative level on non-evil users—consult the entry for the *Dread Forge* in the Appendix for more details. Powerful temples of good often purchase evil magic items like these, not for their own use but to destroy or even redeem these items. The act of "purchasing" them from adventrues is more like a reward for doing the right thing and turning the evil items over to the proper authorities.

level of the temple where they can call on additional allies (such as the Great Beast and Shamok the sorcerer from area **15** and the stone golem in area **18**). Lesser priests and soldier apes fight to the death, while the khelm-priests and Satonga (area **14**), high priest Tellax (area **17**), and Shamok try to escape if they think they'll be killed. Only the death knight has any interest in negotiation; he's only here to get his curse removed and has neither loyalty to the trogs nor any intent of selling his life to save them.

The defenses of the early areas of the temple are relatively weak compared to a group of 14th-level PCs, whereas the later encounters grow stronger and more level-appropriate. In a high-level game this may make the PCs overconfident as they easily sweep through the first encounters and waste powerful spells on minor foes. In a mid-level campaign, the temple is an area for the PCs to explore and then flee, returning after they've gained more power. If mid-level PCs leave the area, the temple shores up its power with more creatures called by *lesser planar ally* and whatever other like-minded creatures they can contact, plus undead created from the corpses of anything they kill while defending the temple.

1A. The Entrance

The lower part of this hill is covered with loose rock, as if a landslide occurred here long ago. Someone or something has moved enough small boulders to reveal a cave entrance. This was done recently, as marks in the earth from the dragged stones are still visible. The cave is at least ten feet wide and extends at least that far into the hillside.

Once the PCs get past the rubble, they encounter a second obstacle that someone else already destroyed.

This part of the cave ends abruptly in a broken stone wall. The parts of the wall that remain, jutting from the floor, walls, and ceiling less than a foot, are smooth stone, unlike the rougher natural material of the rest of the cave. The hole in the west wall is large enough to easily accommodate an ogre-sized creature. The cave tunnel extends beyond the broken wall, with another smooth wall jutting outward from one side to partially close the tunnel.

A character that makes a Spellcraft check (DC 25) recognizes that a *wall of stone* spell created the smooth wall. Characters who investigate this area (DC 20 Search check) realize that there is debris on both sides of the wall, but there is more on the eastern side than the western.

The death knight Lord Khayven found this buried entrance to the temple of Ahmon-Ibor and cleared a path for himself. Beyond the rubble, he found and broke open the *wall of stone* the priests created to physically seal the temple before disguising the entrance with a landslide triggered by an *earthquake* spell (the high priest at the time then used *ethereal jaunt* to pass through the stone and rejoin the others inside). Since the death knight's arrival, the apes have expanded the hole in the *wall of stone* and cleared some of the larger boulders to make it easier for them to get in and out of the cave.

1B. Simple Maze (EL 8)

Smooth walls jut abruptly from the natural cave stone, forming the entrance to some kind of maze.

The trogs created this maze using *wall of stone* spells after the death knight woke them. Its purpose is to prevent light and noise within the temple from reaching outside, to prevent enemy spellcasters from launching long-range spells through the entry hall, and to give invading attackers a physical and magical obstacle to overcome on their way into the temple.

Trap: The maze contains four *glyphs of warding* triggered by any creature that doesn't worship Demogorgon—two blast glyphs (one fire and one sonic), one monster summoning spell glyph (*summon monster III* to summon a fiendish ape), and one *blindness* spell glyph. These glyphs are mostly an annoyance to high-level PCs, but the trogs don't know how powerful their potential enemies are and assume that these efforts are sufficient to keep the rabble away while they adjust to their new world.

The noise of the summoned fiendish ape and the blast glyphs (particularly the sonic blast glyph) automatically alerts the war apes in area **5** that enemy creatures are approaching; they remain alert and vigilant for about 5 minutes before returning to their normal state. The war apes tell any trog or awakened ape that enters their area about the noise in the maze, after which a small search party consisting of one hurrotch (see page 73) and one lesser trog priest (see page 73) investigate what happened.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 6th-level cleric, 3d8 sonic or 3d8 fire, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

***Glyph of Warding* (Spell)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*summon monster III*, 6th-level cleric, fiendish ape); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Fiendish Ape: CR 4; Large magical beast; HD 4d8+11; hp 29; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA smite good 1/day (+4 damage); SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire 5, scent, spell resistance 9; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +14, Listen +6, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Toughness.

***Glyph of Warding* (Spell)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*blindness/deafness*, 6th-level cleric, Fortitude DC 14 resists); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

2. Worship Room (EL 4)

This large natural cave is broken into two areas by a ten-foot vertical rise running north-south. Simple carved niches in the rock on this level still hold burned-out torches made of branches and grass. The area beyond the rise is almost as large as this area and lit with an evil-looking red glow; three primitive stone pillars reach from the top of the rise all the way to the 30-foot ceiling. A narrow stair on the north wall connects this lower level with the higher level beyond.

When human worshipers brought sacrifices to the temple, they gathered here in the lower level and awaited the appearance of one of the trog priests by the carved pillars. Once the priest appeared, they made prayers and offered the sacrifices until the priest gave them permission to leave. It was forbidden for humans to touch the stairs or ascend to the upper ledge in any way, and the lower part of the cliff-like ledge and the entire stairs are carved with skulls and other death icons.

Trap: The stairs bear another blast *glyph of warding* triggered by any non-worshipper of Demogorgon. The noise of the glyph automatically alerts the war apes in area **5**.

↗ ***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 6th-level cleric, 3d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

3. Priest Overlook

From this elevated position near the evil-looking red lights, everything in the lower room is in view. The four pillars near the edge of the small cliff are carved with evil symbols. To the west the hall ends in a large doorway in a natural stone wall. Beyond the doorway is some kind of pit, barely visible in the red light.

Though this chamber has the same ceiling of area **2**, the 10-foot elevation of this ledge means the distance to the ceiling is only 20 feet here. The pillars are nonmagical and are only here for cosmetic purposes—they are not necessary to hold up the ceiling. Because the distance between the floor here and that of area **2** is only 10 feet, most of the apes can easily make a DC 15 Jump check to leap down safely or a Climb check to clamber down.

4. Doorway Of Power (EL 8)

This western wall is made of smooth stone like that of the maze. It has a large doorway, 10 feet across and nearly fifteen feet high. Just beyond the doorway is a 10 foot wide pit in the floor. Red light up ahead from around a corner backlights a cylindrical structure about 80 feet away, beyond a dark area where the red light in the previous room fails to illuminate.

This large doorway was created by a *wall of stone* spell to restrict access to the parts of the temple where nonbelievers should never walk.

The pit beyond is only 10 ft. wide and 10 ft. deep and not much of an obstacle (Jump DC 10 with a 20-foot running start, DC 20 without), only put here in the old days to prevent common humans from sneaking around in the temple. It doesn't even have spikes at the bottom. If the trogs end up staying at this location, they might eventually use a *lesser planar ally* to put a monster in the pit.

Trap: The floor of the doorway is warded by a *symbol of weakness* cast by Tellax, the current troglodyte high priest. Any creature that passes through the opening triggers it. All creatures living in the temple know the password to bypass this symbol ("sibilant," in Abyssal). This spell is a significant threat intended to deter all other potential invaders, as any creature that has survived the *glyphs of warding* in the outer areas is dangerous enough to be dealt with harshly. Once activated, the symbol persists for 140 minutes, and a creature can succumb to its effects multiple times if it leaves and re-enters the symbol's 60-foot radius of power.

↗ ***Symbol of Weakness***: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*blindness/deafness*, 16th-level cleric, Fortitude DC 24 resists); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Development: The war apes in area **5** avoid coming within 60 feet of the *symbol* unless their opponents refuse to come any closer, in which case they shout out the password as they approach to make sure they aren't harmed (though they are only Int 6, the priests and other apes told them repeatedly the consequences of approaching without using the password). PCs who speak Abyssal and hear the password can recognize it and use it easily; PCs who don't speak the language must succeed at an Intelligence check (DC 15) to correctly repeat the password by ear alone.

5. Well Room (EL 10)

The far end of this natural cavern splits into three wide hallways leading north, south, and west. Red light from just around the north and south corners is barely enough to illuminate an old well in the center of this room, made of stones piled in a circle with an open top.

Creatures: Before the PCs approach too close to the well, four war apes hiding around the north and south corner (in a niche where their shadows from the red light won't betray them) rush in and attack. The war apes are a simple but noisy threat, and their howls and screeches in combat are loud enough to alert the hurrotch in area **6**, the lesser priests in area **7**, and possibly the khelm-priests in **12**.

Living in the well is a fiendish giant octopus summoned by high priest Tellax. In exchange for food, healing, and some shiny treasure, the fiend agrees to attack any enemy creatures that approach the well. The octopus uses four of its limbs to brace itself within the well shaft and the other four to attack (it can't bite creatures unless they enter the well). While it remains in the well, the octopus has half cover for the purposes of avoiding area attacks from creatures outside the well (+2 on Reflex saves), though its tentacle attacks and attempts to sunder its tentacles gain no cover. If brought below 10 hit

points, it drops fully into the well (a free action) and uses its ink cloud ability to hide from its enemies. The water is 100 ft. deep, and the well shaft broadens to 20 ft. wide after a 10-ft. vertical drop. The fiend contaminates the well with its waste but the lesser priests use *purify food and drink* on the well every day to offset this (which also removes any octopus ink).

This is an EL 10 encounter because the war apes aren't enough of a threat to increase the encounter level above that of the fiendish giant octopus, but the apes give melee-oriented characters the opportunity to use feats like Cleave and spellcasters the opportunity to take out multiple foes with area attacks.

War Apes, awakened advanced baboons (4): CR 2; Medium magical beast (augmented animal); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA —; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +11, Listen +6, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (slam).

Fiendish giant octopus: CR 10; Large magical beast (aquatic, augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 8d8+11; hp 47; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk +10 melee (1d4+5, tentacle); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4+5, 8 tentacles), +5 melee (1d8+2, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with tentacle) ft.; SA smite good 1/day (+8 damage), constrict (2d8+6), improved grab; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., ink cloud, jet, low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire 10, spell resistance 13; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills: Escape Artist +12, Hide +12, Listen +4, Spot +6, Swim +13

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Hide), Toughness.

6. Hurrotch Barracks (El 12)

A red light at the far end of this cave illuminates four large sleeping pallets. A narrow hallway leads off to the southwest.

Creatures: This is the sleeping area for the temple's four hurrotchs. Hurrotchs are the "armored ogres" the dwarves spotted, and even up close it's easy to see how someone could mistake them for ogres—as awakened dire apes with combat training, they're ogre-sized, proportioned like ogres (hunched and long-armed), and carry weapons. However, at close range they are clearly ape-like, and their armor and weapons

are far better quality than most ogres ever use.

Two of these hurrotch normally stand guard over the lesser priests (areas **7** and **8**); the other two are usually here (eating, resting, or sleeping) or speaking with Garag (area **13**). If the PCs killed a hurrotch in an encounter outside the temple, only three are left (two continue to guard the lesser priests, leaving one to wander between Garag and this area). They react to the sound of combat as described earlier. The EL listed above assumes two hurrotch are in this room.

Hurrotch, awakened dire ape Ftr7 (2): CR 10; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 7d8+21 plus 7d10+21 plus 3; hp 115 each; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +12; Grp +22; Atk +16 melee (2d6+12/17–20, *+1 human bane longsword* with 3 points in Power Attack) or +13 thrown (1d8+6, javelin); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (2d6+12/17–20, *+1 human bane longsword* with 3 points in Power Attack) and +9 melee (1d8+6, bite with 3 points in Power Attack) or +13 thrown (1d8+6, javelin); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rend (2d6+9); SQ low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 22, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +1, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes[B], Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative[B], Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)[B].

Language: Abyssal.

Possessions: *+1 demontainted breastplate, +1 demontainted light steel shield, +1 demontainted human bane longsword*, 2 javelins, *potion of cure serious wounds*.

Tactics: A hurrotch uses its sword and bite in combat. It knows its weapon is more effective against humans and given two otherwise equal targets, it attacks humans over any other target. Its scent ability means that even in total darkness it automatically pinpoints the location of all creatures adjacent to it (no need to guess the target's square, but the 50% miss chance for concealment still applies).

7. Lesser Priest Chamber (EL 12)

This room has no light source of its own. Five human-sized sleeping pallets sit against the walls. Carved on the wall is a crude symbol of a two-headed ape. A faint unpleasant smell pervades this area.

Any PC who has fought troglodytes before immediately recognizes the smell as a faint version of troglodyte stench. A PC who makes a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (the planes) check recognizes that the carved symbol is one used by Demogorgon, Prince of Demons.

Creatures: In old times, five lesser troglodyte priests lived here; now there are only four, as one of them did not survive awakening from hibernation. One hurrotch normally guards the priests, and one priest stands watch with the ape. The EL for this area assumes four lesser priests and one hurrotch.

Lesser Trog Priests, troglodyte cleric 6 (4): CR 7; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 8d8+24; hp 60; Init –1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/×3, *+1 shortspear*) or +5 thrown (1d6+2/×3, *+1 shortspear*); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/×3, *+1 shortspear*) and +4 melee (1d4, claw) and +4 melee (1d6, bite) or +5 thrown (1d6+1/×3, *+1 shortspear*); SA rebuke undead, spells, stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +7, Craft (armorsmithing or weaponsmithing) +4, Hide +8 (+12 in rocky or underground areas), Intimidate +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Listen +7, Spellcraft +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Multiattack[B], Spell Focus (enchantment).

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Terran.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/5/5/3; caster level 6): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *create water, detect magic, purify food and drink*; 1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds, divine favor, obscuring mist, protection from good*[D]; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *darkness, hold person* (DC 15), *shatter*[D] (DC 14); 3rd—*cure serious wounds* (2), *magic circle against good*[D].

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (+1 caster level to chaos spells), Evil (+1 caster level to evil spells).

Note: One of these clerics has prepared *create food and water* instead of one of its two *cure serious wounds* spells, and casts it immediately after preparing it; this food is stored in area **9**.

Possessions: *+1 demontainted shortspear, demontainted bracers of armor +2, demontainted ring of protection +1, wand of cure light wounds* (20 charges).

Hurrotch: hp 115; see page 73.

Tactics: Unless the PCs are incredibly stealthy, they won't encounter any priests here; usually the noise of a fight in area **5** attracts their attention. If there is a fight in this room, the hurrotch stands just outside the doorway to keep anyone from getting to the priests, and they fire offensive spells past their guardian or use curative or defensive magic on it or themselves. If the attackers bring no light, the troglodytes use their darkvision and the hurrotch uses scent to locate enemies. Remember that creatures within 30 feet of the angry trogs (excluding the hurrotch) are subject to their stench ability. If in danger of slaughter, the trogs use *obscuring mist* and *darkness* to hide their escape toward the tunnel in area **9**, leaving the hurrotch to hold the line.

If they are reacting to an attack in area **5**, the trogs use *command* and *hold person* on invaders (who, given the lights in that area, are quite visible from this part of the hall), hoping to give an advantage to the war apes or any hurrotch reinforcements from area **6**. If enemies move toward them, they retreat as described above, though the hurrotch may fall back with them or charge toward the battle in area **5** to distract enemies from thoughts of pursuit.

8. Lesser Priest Chamber (EL 12)

Creatures: This area is essentially identical to area **7**, with five sleeping pallets, four lesser priests, and one hurrotch guard. These monsters use the same tactics as those in area **7**. If these monsters and those from area **7** are fought as a group, it is an EL 14 encounter.

Lesser trog priests (4): hp 60; see page 73.

Hurrotch: hp 115; see page 73.

If the PCs Retreat

If the PCs attack the temple and fall back, the trogs and apes don't just wait for them to return. In addition to augmenting the temple defenses as described elsewhere, the trogs seek out the PCs and try to kill them before the invaders can rest and recover. This usually means the trogs wait until they've prepared new spells at midnight, then use *helping hand* to lead the way to the closest creature matching the description of one PC. As only the caster and target can see the hand, this means the search party consists of one priest (lesser or khelm, depending on the estimated power of the PCs) and 2–3 hurrotchs.

9. Food Storage (EL 4)

Several dozen clay pots hold water or simple foodstuffs, enough to feed about thirty people for one day. A narrow tunnel leads west.

A PC who makes a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check or a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check recognizes that this food was created by a *create food and water spell*. Two lesser priests (one from area **7**, one from **8**) cast the spell daily and store the food here for use by anyone in the temple. Any excess that spoils is fixed with *purify food and drink*. The outside patrols also round up live food, which is consumed almost immediately as a welcome change from this bland fare, and it is never around long enough to be stored here.

Trap: The tunnel leading to the middle levels of the temple is trapped with a *glyph of warding* triggered by any non-worshiper of Demogorgon. The noise of the glyph automatically alerts the trogs and hurrotch in areas **8** and **9**, and Garag in **13**. The priests on the lower level send a hurrotch to investigate, while Garag wakes his masters in **14** and hides in the large hall for enemies to step out.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 6th-level cleric, 3d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

10. Sloping Tunnel (EL 7)

This broad hallway slopes upward, not quite steep enough to require climbing to move forward. Ahead, another red light around a slight turn shows the hall continues on.

Trap: The tunnel leading to the middle levels of the temple is trapped with a *greater glyph of warding* triggered by any non-worshiper of Demogorgon. The noise of the glyph automatically alerts the lesser priests in area **8** and Garag in **13**.

***Greater Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*greater glyph of warding* [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic, DC 23 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

11. Water Storage

A red glow on the wall illuminates several large clay pots of water.

The pots contain water from *create water* spells, placed here as a convenient source of drinking water for the upper level of the temple. The priests use *purify food and drink* on it every day.

Development: Because of its centralized location, this area may become the hub of a great battle with the monsters from areas **13** and **14**. A fight with these two groups is an EL 16 encounter.

12. Empty Priest Chamber (EL 7)

This chamber has two sleeping pallets and a small two-headed baboon idol carved into one wall. A small hallway leads north.

A PC who makes a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (the planes) check recognizes that the carved symbol is one used by Demogorgon, Prince of Demons.

When the temple was active, there were more mid-level priests (called "khelms" in this temple) and the cult used this room to house them. As only half of the khelms survived hibernation and the death knight's prodding, this room is now unused. Tellax placed a *glyph of warding* here to alert them if anyone started snooping around.

Trap: The center of this room is trapped with a *greater glyph of warding* triggered by any non-worshiper of Demogorgon. The noise of the *glyph* automatically alerts the creatures in areas **13**, **14**, and **15**.

***Greater Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*greater glyph of warding* [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic, DC 23 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

13. Garag And The Cannibal (EL 15)

This area smells like metal, dust, and fur. A red light illuminates the room, showing a large sleeping pallet on the floor, a small tunnel to the southwest, and a big iron hook attached to the south wall.

Creatures: This is the lair of Garag, the temple's champion. Garag is the mightiest of the intelligent awakened apes, more skilled in fighting than any hurrotch or other sort of creature the trogs have ever seen. He is fiercely loyal to his priest-masters and would gladly die for them, as he believes he would be made a champion of Demogorgon in the Abyss for his service.

The awakened dire ape called "the Cannibal" is Garag's servant and lover; the Cannibal is the only female dire ape to survive hibernation. She's not very smart, but she makes up for that with her ferocity, and in their own strange way she and Garag love each other. When the temple was active long ago, she had a habit of killing and eating other dire apes that crossed her. She still carries a great (tooth-marked) thighbone as a trophy of one of these fights. Because of her behavior, she wears an iron collar and 10-foot length of chain—Garag normally holds the end of the chain but releases her in combat (the iron hook in the wall is used to restrain her when she becomes aggressive to others).

The listed encounter level only includes Garag's CR, as the Cannibal's contribution is negligible compared to him.

Garag, male awakened dire ape fighter 12: CR 15; Large magical beast

(augmented animal); HD 7d8+21 plus 12d10+36 plus 3; hp 157; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +17; Grp +28; Atk +20 melee (2d6+18/17–20, *+1 human bane longsword* with 6 points in Power Attack), or +19 thrown (1d8+7, javelin); Full Atk +20/+15/+10/+5 melee (2d6+18/17–20, *+1 human bane longsword* with 6 points in Power Attack) and +18 melee (2d6+3, bite with 6 points in Power Attack) or +19 thrown (1d8+7, javelin); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rend (2d6+14); SQ low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +13, Will +13; Str 24, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +12, Intimidate +12, Jump +12, Listen +7, Move Silently +2, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Greater Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative[B], Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Sunder[B], Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)[B].

Languages: Abyssal.

Possessions: *+1 demontainted moderate fortification breastplate, +2 demontainted small steel shield, +2 demontainted human bane longsword*, 2 javelins, *cloak of resistance +1, gauntlets of ogre power +2, demontainted ring of minor fire resistance, potion of cure serious wounds.*

The Cannibal, female awakened advanced dire ape: CR 4; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 9d8+18 plus 3; hp 61; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +16; Atk +11 melee (1d6+6, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+6, 2 claws), +6 melee (1d8+3, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rend (2d6+9); SQ low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +7; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +14, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness.

Language: Abyssal.

Tactics: If the PCs have reached the middle temple, Garag knows they are very dangerous and must be destroyed. He howls and fights as loudly as possible to alert the rest of the temple. He prefers to go after human opponents first, using the extra power of his sword to cut them down more quickly. He tries to disarm enemies who carry weapons that look powerful, and uses Power Attack at +10 against enemies he can easily hit. The Cannibal stays close to Garag, preferring opponents with little or no armor so when she rends she can feel the blood spray on her fur.

If Garag is killed, the Cannibal becomes enraged and gets a +2 morale bonus on attacks, damage, and saving throws for one minute, breaking off combat with her current opponent to try to kill the one who killed Garag. Garag responds the same way if the Cannibal is killed.

14. Priest Chamber And Ape Priest (EL 14)

This chamber has three sleeping pallets and a small two-headed baboon idol carved into one wall. A small hallway leads north. A faint unpleasant smell lingers here.

Creatures: Other than the number of sleeping pallets, this room looks identical to area **12**. Unlike that room this one is inhabited by two "khelm" priests (high priests) and a dangerous awakened baboon named Satonga.

Each khelm wears a decorative metal helm set with a polished uncut ruby (similar to that on the end of the *Dread Rod*), which instantly marks them as different than the lesser priests. Satonga is an awakened baboon, the only one yet to have taken an interest in divine magic. He carries an evil-looking mace, and drapes a lion-skin around his shoulders (a trophy from a long-ago sacrifice to the temple).

Khelm priest, troglodyte cleric 10 (2): CR 11; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 12d8+36; hp 90; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +8; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+1/×3, *+1 human bane shortspear*), or +9 thrown (1d6+1/×3, *+1 human bane shortspear*); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+1/×3, *+1 human bane shortspear*) and +6 melee (1d4, claw) and +6 melee (1d6, bite) or +9 thrown (1d6+1/×3, *+1 human bane shortspear*); SA rebuke undead, spells, stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +3, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (armorsmithing or weaponsmithing) +6, Hide +9 (+13 in rocky or underground settings), Knowledge (religion) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +11, Spellcraft +6, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Multiattack[B].

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Terran.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 10): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic, detect poison, mending*; 1st—*command* (DC 15), *cure light wounds* (2), *deathwatch, obscuring mist, protection from good*[D]; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, darkness, delay poison, shatter*[D] (DC 16), *shield other, spiritual weapon* (+12 melee); 3rd—*cure serious wounds, helping hand, magic circle against good*[D], *meld into stone, protection from energy*; 4th—*chaos hammer*[D] (DC 18), *cure critical wounds, dimensional anchor, freedom of movement, poison* (+8 melee touch, DC 18); 5th—*dispel good*[D], *greater command* (DC 19), *plane shift* (DC 19).

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (+1 caster level to chaos spells), Evil (+1 caster level to evil spells).

Possessions: *+1 demontainted breastplate, +1 demontainted light steel shield, +1 demontainted human bane shortspear, demontainted ring of protection +2, helm of Wisdom +2* (as *periapt of Wisdom +2*).

Satonga, awakened baboon rogue 7/cleric 3: CR 12; Medium magical beast (augmented animal); HD 6d8+12 plus 7d6+14; hp 77; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +13; Atk +14 melee (1d8+5, *+1 human bane heavy mace*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+5, *+1 human bane heavy mace*) and +8 melee (1d4+2, claw) and +8 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA rebuke undead, sneak attack +4d6, spells, SQ evasion, low-light vision, scent, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +12, Concentration +5, Hide +15, Jump +13, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +16, Move Silently +14, Sense Motive +5, Spot +15, Tumble +12.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stealthy.

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Terran.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 3): 0—*cure minor wounds, light, purify food and drink* (2); 1st—*cure light wounds* (3), *protection from good*[D]; 2nd—*darkness, shatter*[D] (DC 14).

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (+1 caster level to chaos spells), Evil (+1 caster level to evil spells).

Possessions: +2 demontainted studded leather, +1 demontainted human bane heavy mace, cloak of resistance +1, ring of invisibility (3 uses/day), *wand of cure light wounds* (35 charges).

Tactics: The khelms are confident in their power and angry at being challenged by "upstart races." They are familiar with their spells and plan ahead, using protective magic in anticipation of attack and changing their strategy in response to enemy actions. They are not suicidal, and if they feel threatened they flee toward the altar room. If things start to look exceptionally grim for them, they abandon the temple with *plane shift*, bringing as much of the temple loot as they can carry. Given warning of attackers, they use *meld into stone* to hide themselves and cast protective magic such as *delay poison, freedom of movement, magic circle against good*, and *protection from energy* (electricity or fire). If they get the chance, one casts *shield other* on Garag to help the champion fight longer. Like the lesser priests, they may use *obscuring mist* and *darkness* to hide their retreat.

At the first sign of approaching enemies, Satonga turns invisible with his ring, casts *protection from good* on himself, and sneaks around hoping to learn more about the invaders and possibly make a sneak attack, though he'd prefer to remain *invisible* and heal his allies with his *wand of cure light wounds*.

15. Great Beast And Handler (EL 14)

This large chamber smells of dirty animal fur and offal. The red light shows a circular depression in the center of the room that is partly filled with straw and bones. A hallway leads west.

Creatures: The *Dread Forge* sometimes achieves great success in its awakened creatures—Garag is one example of this. Sometimes the process goes awry, creating a creature barely more intelligent than an animal but with great potential in other ways—the Great Best that lives in this cavern is one such creature. This Huge awakened advanced dire ape is as big as a bull elephant and barely smart enough to understand the orders its

master gives it. It spends most of its time sleeping, but if awakened to the noise of battle it happily charges in to rend and kill. The one creature in the temple it truly likes is the baboon sorcerer Shamok—only Shamok can calm it down when it grows angry. The trogs give it a wide berth, seeing it as a dangerous weapon that they're glad to have on their side instead of running around free.

Shamok is another unique ape, like Satonga, but skilled in arcane magic. He is smart enough to know he is valued, but wise enough to know his place; he knows that the trog-priests created him out of a dumb animal and their combined power is greater than his. He serves them loyally, knowing that his service to the temple is rewarded with safety and shared power.

The Great Beast, awakened advanced dire ape: CR 12; Huge magical beast (augmented animal); HD 25d8+150 plus 3; hp 265; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +18; Grp +36; Atk +20 melee (3d6+16, claw with 6 points in Power Attack); Full Atk +20 melee (3d6+16, 2 claws with 6 points in Power Attack), +15 melee (2d6+11, bite with 6 points in Power Attack); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA rend (6d6+20); SQ low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +20, Ref +16, Will +15; Str 30, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +18, Listen +13, Move Silently +10, Spot +13.

Feats: Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Abyssal.

Shamok, awakened baboon sorcerer 11: CR 12; Medium magical beast (augmented animal); HD 3d8+9 plus 11d4+33; hp 83; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (1d4+3, claw); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4+3, 2 claws), +5 melee (1d6+1, bite); SA spells; SQ low-light vision, scent, summon familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills: Climb +20, Concentration +8, Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +4, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness (if Shekilat is in arm's reach), Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stealthy.

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/4; caster level 11): 0—*acid splash* (+11 ranged touch), *daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *disrupt undead* (+11 ranged touch), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st—*alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *shocking grasp* (+10 touch), *shield*; 2nd—*darkvision*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *rage*, *stinking cloud* (DC 17), *vampiric touch* (+10 touch); 4th—*enervation* (+11 ranged touch), *Evard's black tentacles* (+19 grapple), *summon monster IV*; 5th—*cloudkill*, *telekinesis*.

Possessions: *Lesser rod of extend metamagic*, *demontainted ring of protection +3*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *bracers of health +2* (as *amulet of health +2*).

Shekilat, lizard familiar: hp 41; *Monster Manual* 275.

Tactics: The Great Beast spends most of its time sleeping, but sounds of a fight nearby wake it. Rather than going toward the fight, it moves toward the altar room to see if Shamok is safe.

Shamok spends most of his waking time in the altar room (area **18**) working on the Dread Forge, either studying its power or thinking of the best way to use its power to augment the temple's existing items. Because of distance and the middle temple door he is unlikely to hear any fighting from the altar room unless it is very loud. A retreating khelm or high priest Tellax alerts him to danger, as does any creature approaching the door to the altar room (because of his *alarm* spell, see area **18**). He casts *mage armor* daily, extending the spell with his rod. If he has time to prepare for battle, he casts *darkvision*, *expeditious retreat*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *resist energy* (electricity and fire), and *shield*, extending *mirror image* and *shield*.

16. Storage

This is some kind of storage room, with clay pots, lengths of rusting iron, and tools for working metal and stone. Judging by the dust, none of it has been used in a long while.

This area holds tools the apes use to dig new rooms and the trogs use to craft more weapons and armor, though they haven't needed to do so since they sealed the temple.

17. High Priest Chamber (EL 15)

This room is clearly intended for a creature of great status. The walls are carved with evil symbols, and the now-familiar two-headed baboon idol is larger and more detailed, though rather than arms, this idol has tentacles. Instead of a sleeping pallet made of straw, this room has a pile of furs, though none of them appear valuable.

Creature: This is the bedchamber of Tellax, the temple high priest. A wily troglodyte, he was the first creature successfully roused by the death knight. While Lord Khayven explained his purpose at the temple, Tellax saw that the true high priest was still in the timeless sleep. While the death knight was distracted rousing other members of the temple, Tellax took a moment to stab his superior through the eyes and into the brain, killing him. Tellax took on the title of high priest, as none of the others were powerful enough to stop him. Enough priests and guards survived the reviving for him to justify staying at the temple rather than fleeing for a less-inhabited part of the world. Now he and Shamok use the *Dread Forge* to siphon power from the death knight and augment the temple defenses while stringing the death knight along with stories of progress.

Tellax is no fool. He knows Khayven is incredibly dangerous and fears the death knight grows frustrated with his slow progress. When he feels the risk

has become too great he'll direct the khelms, Garag, and Shamok to join him in attacking their common enemy, for after all, despite the death knight's ties to Demogorgon's power, Khayven is just one of the disgusting humans that usurped control of the world from the reptilian races.

The listed EL assumes Tellax is fought alone in his room, though in most cases he'll move to the altar room (area **18**) before battle.

Tellax, high priest troglodyte cleric 14: CR 15; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 16d8+48; hp 120; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +11; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+2 plus 1d6 fire, the *Dread Rod*); Full Atk +13/+8/+3 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 fire, the *Dread Rod*) and +9 melee (1d4, claw) and +9 melee (1d6, bite); SA rebuke undead, spells, stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +8, Will +18; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 25, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +17, Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Forgery +4, Hide +9 (+13 in rocky or underground terrain), Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Listen +14, Move Silently +2, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Alertness, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack[B], Persuasive, Practiced Spellcaster*.

*This feat increases Tellax's cleric caster level by +2, allowing him to apply his racial Hit Dice to his overall caster level for the purposes of spell durations and effects and rolls to penetrate spell resistance. For full details on this feat, see *Complete Divine*, page 82.

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Terran.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/8/8/7/6/5/5/4; caster level 16): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds* (3), *detect magic, purify food and drink*; 1st—*command* (DC 18), *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor, entropic shield, obscuring mist, protection from good*[D], *shield of faith*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *darkness, hold person* (DC 19), *lesser restoration, shatter*[D] (DC 19), *shield other, status* (already cast); 3rd—*animate dead, helping hand, invisibility purge, magic circle against good*[D], *magic vestment* (2, both already cast), *protection from energy*; 4th—*cure critical wounds* (2), *dismissal, divination, poison* (+13 touch, DC 21), *unholy blight*[D] (DC 21); 5th—*dispel good*[D], *flame strike* (DC 22), *plane shift* (DC 22), *spell resistance, wall of stone*; 6th—*create undead*[D], *greater dispel magic, heal, mass cure serious wounds, summon monster VI*; 7th—*blasphemy*[D], *destruction* (DC 24), *mass cure serious wounds, summon monster VII*.

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (+1 caster level to chaos spells), Evil (+1 caster level to evil spells).

Possessions: *Dread Rod, +2 demontainted heavy steel shield* (enhanced by *magic vestment*), *helm of Wisdom +6, cloak of resistance +2*, leather harnesses and belts (enhanced by *magic vestment*), 450 gp of onyx gems (for *animate dead*).

Tactics: Tellax is a schemer and planner and doesn't leave survival to chance. Every day he casts *status* on the khelms, Garag, and one of the hurrotch so he is aware of his strongest allies and informed if any of them take damage. At the first sign of a significant attack (one that gets past the war apes in area **5**), he casts *magic circle against good* and *protection from energy* (fire). When enemies are very close he casts *invisibility purge* and *spell resistance* (giving him SR 26), all the while moving toward the altar room. If *status* tells him that his linked allies are eliminated quickly he uses *wall of stone* from within the altar room to seal it off and delay the attackers further. In direct combat he summons demons or elementals and uses powerful spells like *blasphemy* and *destruction* to get rid of enemies quickly, falling back on *flame strike* for a direct attack and *dismissal* and *dispel good* to get rid of good summoned creatures. If these efforts fail, he uses *plane shift* to escape, taking a living ally with him if possible.

Trap: Like most betrayers, Tellax fears an assassination attempt. He has instructed none to enter his room, and guards it with a *greater glyph of warding* triggered by any creature that doesn't speak the password ("power" in Abyssal); the noise of the glyph automatically alerts any creature in the hall or in areas **15** and **16**.

***Greater Glyph of Warding* (Spell)**: CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*greater glyph of warding* [spell], 16th-level cleric, harm, DC 23 Fortitude save for half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

18. Altar Room (EL 16)

The door to this room is normally closed, though there is enough of a gap between the door and the wall to let light from inside spill out, filling the area 5 feet from the door with shadowy light. Shamok always casts an *alarm* spell (mental alarm) just outside this door whenever he goes into the altar room to work, so he is immediately aware of any creature about to enter the room (he dismisses the spell before he sleeps so activity by other members of the temple do not disturb his rest).

This grand cavern is lit with the now-familiar red lights and filled with troglodyte stench. To the south, three simple stone benches face the west wall. To the north, under one of the lights, sits a large metal anvil graven with evil-looking symbols and partly glowing red-hot. Several small chests are arranged nearby, along with a pile of armor. The west wall bears an evil altar—a rectangular bloodstained slab of rock under a large carving of a tentacled demon with two bestial heads. Red magical lights shine from the altar, illuminating the statue with an evil glow and stark shadows.

The ceiling here is 20 feet high. The anvil is the *Dread Forge*. A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the crude, bestial visage of this statue depicts Demogorgon in a slightly more canine aspect, usually associated with the ancient cult of Ahmon-Ibor.

Assuming he is aware of the invaders and hasn't been killed, Shamok is waiting here, invisible. If he is still alive, the Great Beast stands near Shamok. Tellax stands near the altar, along with any other creatures that have retreated to this room. Finally, the death knight Lord Khayven is also present; he stands near the pews, silent and patient. He is alert but doesn't look particularly hostile (he doesn't even have a weapon drawn). When he sees enemy creatures enter the altar room, he commands them to halt in Common.

"Hold, intruders! You know not what you interfere with! These creatures have no business with you, save that you have attacked them. I, Lord Khayven of Rax, have no interest in fighting you at all. Begone, and I will spare your lives."

PCs who make a DC 20 Knowledge (history) or DC 25 Knowledge (arcana or religion) check recognize "Lord Khayven of Rax" as the name of one of thirteen knights who served the Great Kingdom nearly 400 years ago. They were betrayed by a corrupt knight who turned them against the king, and through a pact with a Demogorgon they became the first death knights. A PC who makes a DC 25 Knowledge (history or local) check recalls rumors of a powerful undead creature called Lord Khayven in the service of Prince Reydrich of Ahlissa. Everything they know about him indicates that he's evil, and his appearance should back up that estimation.

In truth, Khayven really has no interest in fighting the PCs. He doesn't know them, and he doesn't care about the temple inhabitants other than their ability to help remove his curse, and he suspects that any of the three most powerful priests can do that. Khayven is willing to negotiate with the PCs to allow him to continue working with Tellax on the Dread Forge, and even tells them why he is here; once he's cured he doesn't care what happens to the trogs, even if the PCs express an interest in killing them. As the demon-worshippers don't speak Common and don't have spells prepared to overcome that, Khayven can negotiate freely with the PCs right in front of the trogs.

Tellax is willing to negotiate as well; if given the opportunity to leave the plane with their equipment and the *Dread Forge*, he accepts it. Any other demands are likely to make him angry, but he offers the cult's extra treasure (near the *Dread Forge*) to help convince his opponents.

Creatures: If the PCs decide to attack, Khayven becomes angry but stays out of the battle unless he is attacked, in which case he retaliates immediately. If it looks like the PCs are about to defeat the temple defenders, Tellax tries to take the *Dread Forge* and leave, killing anyone who tries to stop him.

The "carving" above the altar is actually a modified stone golem resting in a niche that fits its body; it attacks anyone who harms a trog priest. The golem is identical to the stone golem in the *Monster Manual* except that it has no *slow* effect—instead, its slam attacks inflict mummy rot (DC 17).

Lord Khayven was a striking figure in life—tall, with flowing black hair, a proud nose, and a fierce demeanor. As a death knight he is more horrible. His flesh is leathery and burned as if it contained some great heat. His lips, teeth, and tongue are scorched black, and he breathes steam when he speaks. His eyes are empty sockets lit with pinpoints of intense light. His full plate is ornate in the style of the Great Kingdom 300 years ago, his magnificent but tattered fur cloak shades from brown at the top to black at the bottom, and his winged griffon-helm adds another four inches to his height. His voice is deep and booming.

The encounter level for this area assumes Tellax, the golem, Shamok and his familiar Shekilat, and the Great Beast are fighting and the death knight is not (the EL is somewhere between 16 and 17, as Tellax and Shamok already cast spells on themselves in preparation for battle).

- **Tellax**: hp 120; see page 78.
- **Shamok**: hp 83; see page 77.
- **Shekilat**: hp 41, see page 77.
- **The Great Beast**: hp 265, see page 77.
- **Demogorgon stone golem**: hp 107; SA mummy rot (DC 17); *Monster Manual* 136.
- **Lord Khayven of Rax, male human death knight fighter 14**: CR 17; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 14d12 plus 3; hp 100; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 31, touch 13, flat-footed 30; Base Atk +14; Grp +21; Atk +21 melee (1d8+2 plus 1 Con, negative energy touch) or +20 melee (2d6+29/19–20 plus 1d6 cold, *+3 frost greatsword* with 6 points in Power Attack); Full Atk +21 melee (1d8+2 plus 1 Con, negative energy touch) or +20/+15/+10 melee (2d6+29/19–20 plus 1d6 cold, *+3 frost greatsword* with 6 points in Power Attack); SA abyssal blast, Constitution damage, fear aura; SQ DR 15/magic and cold iron, immunities (cold, electricity, fire, polymorphing, turning), spell resistance 24, summon mount, undead traits; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 24, Dex 14, Con —, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 14; *Monster Manual II* 208.

  Skills: Climb +7, Diplomacy +3, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +16, Jump +7, Knowledge

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(arcana) +5, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +8, Ride +10, Sense Motive +5, Spot +7, Survival +4, Swim +2.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword)[B], Greater Weapon Specialization (greatsword)[B], Improved Initiative[B], Mounted Combat[B], Power Attack[B], Quick Draw, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (greatsword)[B].

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Abyssal Blast (Su): Once per day Khayven can unleash a blast of eldritch fire that fills a 20-foot-radius spread anywhere within a range of 960 feet. This blast deals 14d6 points of damage, half of which is fire, but the rest results directly from divine power and is therefore not subject to being reduced by *protection from energy* or similar magic. A DC 19 Reflex save reduces the damage by half.

Constitution Damage (Ex): Khayven's touch attack deals 1d8+2 points of damage plus 1 point of Constitution damage. A DC 19 Will save halves the damage and negates the Constitution damage.

Fear Aura (Su): Creatures with fewer than 5 Hit Dice within 15 feet of Khayven must make a DC 19 Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 14).

Summon Mount (Su): Khayven can summon a fiendish wyvern mount in the same manner a paladin can summon a warhorse.

Turn Immunity (Ex): Khayven cannot be turned, although he can be banished with *holy word* or *word of chaos* to the Abyss as if he were an evil outsider.

Possessions: +5 full plate, +3 frost greatsword, ring of protection +2, boots of speed, cloak of resistance +2, belt of giant Strength +4, 1,000 gp worth of various gems.

Treasure: The chests near the *Dread Forge* contain the temple's pooled resources: 13,300 gp worth of gems, nuggets of precious metals, and raw valuable substances useful in the crafting of magic items. The pile of armor contains armor and weapons from members of the temple who didn't survive the long sleep (most of their equipment was redistributed among the rest of the faithful, and this is what remains): a *Large +1 demontainted breastplate*, a *Large +1 demontainted small steel shield*, a *Large +1 demontainted human-bane longsword*, and two *+1 demontainted shortspears*.

Concluding The Adventure

If the PCs fail to deal with the trogs, the priests eventually manage to reverse the death knight's condition. Lord Khayven is honorable and won't renege on his peace agreement with the trogs, though he despises them for their connection to Demogorgon. The trogs use the power siphoned from the death knight to craft more magic into their armor and weapons, then strike out to find a safer place for them to live. Depending on how many trog priests remain they may use *plane shift* to travel or call upon winged demons (with *lesser planar ally*) to fly them somewhere. With their advanced knowledge and power, they can easily dominate an evil humanoid tribe and build a power center elsewhere in the world.

If the trogs are slain but the apes survive, they try to find a place to live. The nearest land suitable for their ethos is Ahlissa to the northeast, where they might find mercenary work or join that country's army. Reports of ape-men in that army spread quickly.

If the PCs wipe out the apes and trogs, they still need to deal with the death knight. He is evil, but he's trying to make himself less powerful, so even good parties can consider letting him go in the hopes that he'll undo his curse. Perhaps escaping his curse will allow him to become the honorable knight he once was. Aggressive parties may have a hard time killing the CR 17 death knight, especially after the big battle in the altar room. If Khayven leaves the temple, he summons his mount and rides away. Khayven can be a recurring enemy whether or not he remains a death knight, or perhaps the eventual removal of his undead state lets him turn away from evil. He is disgusted with the state of affairs in the Great Kingdom and might ally with one of the provincial kings in an attempt to recreate the kingdom of his day.

As far as Irongate and the Kingdom of the Iron Hills are concerned, if the "ogres" and their allies have been killed or driven away, the PCs have succeeded and deserve their reward.

If the PCs clear out the temple, they're left with an evil artifact that can still be very useful to non-good and non-lawful characters. Do they try do destroy it? Or sell it to someone who can use it? Is there a way to consecrate it to good? If Khayven or the priests run off with it, can the PCs expect to face future enemies using its creations?

Scaling The Adventure

"Lost Temple of Demogorgon" is designed for a group of four 14th-level PCs, but with a little work it can be adapted for use with 13th or 15th–16th-level characters. Most of the creatures have class levels; you can adjust the adventure in either direction by adjusting the NPC class levels up or down by a number equal to that which the PCs vary from 14th level. Other creatures are improved versions of previous monsters; just use the more advanced version instead of the weaker one.

12th-level PCs: Use hurrotch statistics for Garag. Use war ape statistics for the cannibal. Use lesser priests instead of khelms and a khelm instead of Tellax. Be sure to space out encounters more so the PCs don't run into too many enemies at once.

15th–16th-level PCs: Add the fiendish template to all apes and troglodytes.

Appendix: New Magic Items

The Dread Forge

The *Dread Forge* is an evil artifact created by Demogorgon thousands of years ago, used by his demonic agents to transform dinosaur-like creatures into thinking reptilian humanoids. These first beings were the priests and masters of the primitive reptilian humanoids of an ancient age, and the artifact gave them the tools to cement

themselves in that position of power until their culture degenerated and the mammals ascended.

The *Dread Forge* is a large metal anvil with small and large horns. Its entire surface is inscribed with evil-looking runes, demonic symbols, and tentacle-like coils (though in places where the forge would contact worked metal these are no deeper than a faint etching). It always feels warm to the touch, and on command heats itself to the proper temperature to work bronze, iron, steel, silver, or gold. Any lawful or good creature that touches or carries it gains one negative level (two negative levels if lawful good) as long as it continues to touch or carry it; like the negative level from an anarchic or unholy weapon, this negative level never results in actual level loss but cannot be overcome in any way while the creature is in contact with the *Dread Forge*.

Any spellcaster may use the *Dread Forge* to craft certain kinds of magic armor, weapons, and other metal items. The *Dread Forge* provides the proper item creation feat; the spellcaster provides everything else (gp, XP, other prerequisites, and time). The *Dread Forge* is treated as a focus component in the item-crafting process and the spellcaster must manipulate the item on the *Dread Forge* at some point every day of the crafting (experiencing any negative levels for this contact, as appropriate).

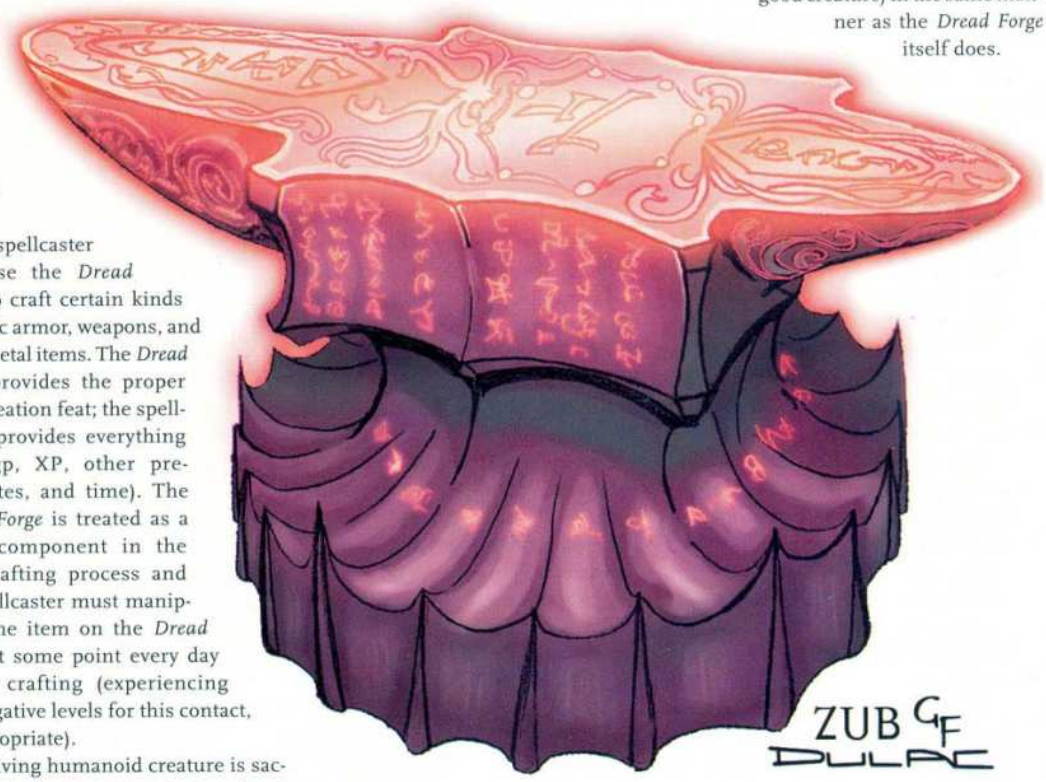
If a living humanoid creature is sacrificed to Demogorgon on the *Dread Forge*, the artifact absorbs some of the creature's essence, equal to 100 XP per HD; it can store up to 1,000 XP at a time. A spellcaster can spend this stored XP instead of his own XP when crafting magic items with the *Dread Forge* (in other words, using the energy of sacrifice to power the item's XP prerequisite). At midnight each night, the *Dread Forge* consumes 100 XP from its store of essence, so a fresh supply or sacrifices is needed to maintain the artifact's optimal essence level. Sacrificing a creature on the *Dread Forge* is an evil act.

The *Dread Forge* can add the following magic properties to items.

- Armor abilities: enhancement bonuses (up to +5), *fire resistance* (normal and improved), *fortification* (light, moderate, and heavy), *invulnerability*.
- Weapon abilities: enhancement bonuses (up to +5), *anarchic*, *bane* (human-bane only), *flaming*, *flaming burst*, *unholy*.
- Rings: *energy resistance* (fire only; minor, major, or greater), *protection* (up to +5).
- Wondrous Items: *bracers of armor* (up to +8), *ring gates*.

Note that the acting spellcaster's caster level is still a limitation for some of these effects; for example, a 1st-level sorcerer cannot craft any sort of magic armor because he doesn't meet the caster level prerequisite for creating armor with an enhancement bonus (3 × the intended enhancement bonus). A creature cannot use the artifact to craft an item if he doesn't meet the item's prerequisites.

All magic items created with the *Dread Forge* are automatically imbued with the demontainted property. A demontainted item is an evil magic item (for purposes of *detect magic* and other effects that react to evil objects, spells, or creatures) and bestows a negative level to a lawful or good bearer or wearer (2 negative levels to a lawful good creature) in the same manner as the *Dread Forge* itself does.



Once per day, on command, the *Dread Forge* can cast *awaken* on an animal, using stored XP to fuel the spell's XP cost. Unlike the spell, the awakened animal is always chaotic evil.

All of the command words needed to operate the *Dread Forge* are in an older dialect of Abyssal that sounds archaic but is completely understandable to a modern speaker of that language.

Strong evocation; CL 20th; Weight 400 lbs.

The Dread Rod

The *Dread Rod* is an item keyed to the power of the *Dread Forge*. It is an iron rod about 3 feet long, topped with a knot of jagged metal and an uncut ruby. The iron and gemstone are carved with symbols similar to those on the *Dread Forge*, and when the *Dread Forge* is within 100 feet the end of the weapon glows red-hot as well. In combat the rod is a *+2 demon-tainted human bane heavy mace* (treated as having the *flaming* ability if the weapon is hot).

The rod acts as a demonic holy symbol (suitable for use with any spell requiring a clerical divine focus, including those such as *destruction*). A divine spellcaster holding the rod in hand can still use that hand to cast spells. Any creature that holds the rod automatically learns the command words to activate the *Dread Forge*. Once per day the wearer may use the *Dread Rod* to quicken a spell of level 0-3, as if using a *lesser quicken metamagic rod*.

Unlike the *Dread Forge*, the rod is just a magic item and can be destroyed by conventional methods. If the *Dread Forge* is destroyed, the rod loses its ability to quicken spells (which reduces its price by 25,000 gp and cost by 12,500 gp and 1,000 XP) and act as a flaming weapon, but is otherwise unaffected.

Strong conjuration; CL 17th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Quicken Spell, *summon monster I*; Price 68,812; Cost 34,812 gp + 2,720 XP. d

Adapting the Adventure

To insert this adventure into your own campaign, here is additional information on some of the story elements mentioned in the adventure background. The Great Kingdom of Aerdy was a large human kingdom that became corrupt and evil, and eventually lost its outer territories to rebellion and split into two evil and mutually-hostile states (Ahlissa and the North Kingdom). Irongate is a fortified city originally built by the Great Kingdom, and was one of territories in the Great Kingdom's southern lands that broke away. Irongate and some of the other new countries banded together to form the Iron League, with Irongate as its headquarters. The mountains near Irongate are rich in iron and gems and Irongate is known for its quality weapons of human and dwarven manufacture. In recent years Irongate has faced a new enemy to the south called the Scarlet Brotherhood. Originally thought to be a peaceful colony of refugees from an ancient empire, the Brotherhood is actually a racist human nation intent on retaking their place as masters of the world. In a recent war they made great advances with military strikes and key assassinations of enemy leaders. Now Irongate is wary of attack from the Brotherhood to the south and outward-looking daughter states of the Great Kingdom to the north.

Sean K Reynolds has worked for five different game companies in the past ten years. He takes advantage of his rampant insomnia by writing four or more books at the same time. His last known residence is in southern California with a menagerie of cats, fish, guinea pigs, and a good-hearted woman who's managed to put up with him for the last seven years.

MOUNT ZOGON
GALEENA! A PLAS-MODIAL SLIME MOLD!!
NAUGHTY SLIME MOLD! NO EATING MUSHROOM!
IT'S AMAZING HOW SLIME MOLDS DISSOLVE ALL ORGANIC MATTER, EXCEPT YOU.
YEH, IT ONLY EATS-OFF MY TOP LAYER OF DEAD SKIN.
HMMMM...
TONYM © 2005

BY TONY MOSELEY

WHO'S DRIVING THIS CAMPAIGN?

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN (PART 7)

BY MONTE COOK
ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE HUNTER

Normally, when someone brings up the "plotline" of a campaign, we think of epic stories like *The Lord of the Rings*. Even the simplest, most straightforward treasure-hunter campaign has a plotline, however. This plotline propels the player characters from one encounter to the next, from one location to the next, and from one adventure to the next. It is related to the motivation of the player characters (and the players themselves), but it is more than that as well. Basically, it's why your friends show up at your game table from week to week. It's the force that drives the campaign.

There are basically two types of plotlines, and they are quite different from each other—although a good DM can combine them in one campaign. These types are "quest driven" and "player driven."

QUEST-DRIVEN CAMPAIGNS

The first of our two types of campaigns is the quest-driven campaign (also known as the DM-driven campaign, although this latter title sounds redundant). In this context, the term "quest" means something far more straightforward than the spell of the same name, and far more general than Frodo's quest to destroy the One Ring. In this article, "quest" simply means "a DM-granted motivation to do something."

If the PCs are hired by a local mage to find some lost artifact, that's a quest. If they hear that goblins are raiding villages and they want to put a stop to it because that's the right thing to do, that's a quest. If they seek the lost tomb of a fabled king because it reportedly holds a great treasure, that's a quest. Any time the DM dangles a plot hook in front of the PCs and they take the bait, that's a quest. In other words, it's up to the DM to provide the "why" of the campaign, as well as the "what," as in "why are the PCs going into the haunted castle" and "what will they find there."

So this means that the DM drives the campaign. This is a tough job. It's hard enough to detail an entire world and its inhabitants, but to then have to provide all the motivations for the PCs to discover what you've created—that's a lot to ask. But it's all part of the quest-driven campaign, and the quest-driven campaign is the most common type.

Quest-driven adventures are most often just that—quests in the literal sense. The PCs must find some special object, rescue a person in need, or slay some evil beast.

Often, they are multi-stage affairs, with one leading to the next. For example, to slay the dragon Haverus, the PCs must find a dragonslaying spear, but to get into the vault that holds the spear, they must uncover its mystical key. This multi-stage setup is handy, because there is one plotline that drives what are actually multiple, different adventures. The DM doesn't need to introduce new adventure hooks or motivations for the players to go on to the next scenario. (It's also nice because each step of the quest provides a sense of accomplishment for the PCs.)

While this type of campaign requires a lot of work on the DM's part, it's still the simpler of the two to run (or at least run well). Even though the DM provides everything for the players, at least the DM usually knows (generally) what the PCs will do next. The DM is driving the whole campaign, after all.

The danger of the quest-driven campaign is that the players can eventually begin to feel dissatisfied or even bored. The plot hooks can begin to seem obvious and staged unless the DM is careful (see sidebar). Worse yet, the players may feel "railroaded" into moving from one setup to the next, not at all masters of their own fate. They may begin utilizing metagame thinking, saying to themselves "well, I guess this is where we're supposed to go," or "this seems to be what the DM wants us to do." Worst of all, this feeling can lead the players to become very contrary. They will look for clues to what they are "supposed" to do, and then avoid that thing altogether. This is the sign of a bored player.

Good Adventure Hooks

In a way, the most important parts of a quest-driven campaign are the adventure hooks that lead the PCs into the plot. Good hooks come naturally—they don't *feel* like hooks. Events are foreshadowed so that when the adventure hook comes along, it doesn't just appear out of the blue. For example, rather than just saying "the village of Yurrid needs help against an advancing gnoll army," have the PCs hear rumors of skirmishes with gnolls and similar clues to trouble brewing first. Similarly, good hooks build on one another. Once the PCs complete an adventure, the NPCs they have befriended tell them about another situation that could lead into another adventure.

Bait and switch is an interesting tactic to use as an adventure hook (if used sparingly). Make the PCs believe that they are coming into a new area for one reason and then spring an entirely different adventure on them.

Lastly, use one hook against another. If the PCs must get a particular item or bit of information to complete their current quest, the NPC who has the item or information suddenly requires them to perform a task to get what they want. This task is, in itself, a complete and different adventure than the quest the PCs were on previously. (Although you don't ever want the PCs to have so many quests going at once that they can't keep track of them all!)

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PLAYER-DRIVEN CAMPAIGNS

It is possible for the DM to empower the players with the responsibility of deciding what they do. This goes way beyond "should we go left or right at the fork in the road" kinds of decisions. In a player-driven campaign, it's really the players that decide what to do. They make goals for their characters, and then set out to accomplish those goals.

For example, a player might decide that he wants his rogue to start up his own thieves' guild. At low levels, he might just spend a lot of his time getting to know the local area and the local populace—including the movers and shakers, both in the criminal underworld and not. Later, he might try to gather followers, look for a base of operations, and take actions against any and all competition. Even once the guild is up and running, he has to help guide it to greater and greater success and help out against any obstacles that come their way.

In the context of the campaign, then, the player communicates his goals to the DM, and to the other players. The DM then begins to plan encounters and devise situations and scenarios based around the player's goal. He doesn't need to dangle plot hooks in front of the PC, because the character is already motivated and wanting to move forward.

Player goals don't have to be long term, of course. A player might say that his character is interested in obtaining a new magic sword. He uses Gather Information and other skills to learn of any rumors or legends of magic swords in the area. He learns that there is reportedly a powerful blade in a ruined tower outside of town, and another in the hands of a local collector. Does he go exploring the ruins, or does he begin making plans to steal from or negotiate with the collector? That's up to the player. Certainly, the rumors he learns of sound like typical adventure hooks, but the point is that he initiated them, and he decides what to do with them.

The primary job of the DM in a player-driven campaign is to provide the players with the "medium" in which to carry out their goals. Thus, if the players want to start their own business, it's the DM's job to create a city in which to set the business, and all the NPCs that they will meet as they carry out the tasks of setting up shop. In this way, you are giving the PCs just what they want. The secondary job, however, is to provide obstacles and challenges for them as they head toward their goal. So it's not all just about catering to the PCs. It's great that they have goals, but it is the job of the DM to make sure that they work for them. PCs starting a business have to deal with underhanded competitors, fire, criminals, unscrupulous tax collectors, and so on.

Of course, in a player-driven campaign, it is best if the players all have similar

goals or—at the very least—non-competitive ones. If a couple of PCs are only interested in getting rich, while another is highly motivated to bring down a local slavery ring, these PCs can work together easily, because of course the slavers are sure to have plenty of loot to plunder once they are crushed. If one PC wants to join a noble house in the capital city while another wants to establish a monastery in the deep wilderness, however, it's going to be difficult for these characters to do anything together.

Thus, one of the greatest pitfalls of player-driven campaigns is that they can effectively become multiple campaigns—one for each player. The game is meant to be a group activity, and works best when the PCs function as a team. Somehow, the PCs should coordinate their efforts, even if it's just an agreement along the lines of "I'll do whatever I can to see that you avenge your father's death, if you'll help me rid the Gethor Hills of all goblins."

Still, the advantage of having the players feel like they are in control of their own destinies is an extremely effective way to keep them motivated and interested in the campaign. Further, having them set goals for themselves within the context of the world you've created not only leads to more immersive roleplaying but it's highly rewarding for the DM to see the players take such an in-depth interest in what you've developed.

Sometimes, though, players don't want to be in the driver's seat—even if they think they do. The players sit around the table and wonder what their characters should do next, secretly (or not so secretly) wishing that some NPC would just show up and tell them what to do. Even the most motivated player can feel this way.

THE COMBINATION CAMPAIGN

Like with so many things that concern running a campaign, it turns out that perhaps the best way to go is to achieve a happy medium between the two campaign types. That is to say, give the players the ability and freedom to set up goals (both long and short term) for their characters, but be ready at any given moment to throw a quest-based scenario hook or two at them if it seems they need it.

Players "need" a plot hook if their own motivation stalls out for a time. The PC interested in starting his own thieves' guild might hit a temporary impasse with his plans, and find himself with nothing to do for a time. Throwing an unrelated adventure into his lap regarding a treasure map and an old forgotten mine might not only give him something to do while his plans are on hold, but it provides a nice change of pace.

In this kind of campaign, the players can develop their goals at any time. They might follow a few DM-proffered scenario hooks taking them on quest-oriented adventures for a while and then come upon something in the course of play that prompts them to drive the campaign for a while with their own motivations. Maybe, as they explore the wilderness, they find an old tower and decide to make it their own. This requires clearing out any other residents, repairing and supplying it, and perhaps even hiring some NPC guards and staff to man it while they are gone. Once finished, they might go back to a previous quest or take on a new one.

In this kind of campaign, the DM can actually use the players' goals as plot hooks and motivators for a scenario he has planned. For example, if the PCs build a small keep as their base of operations, later the keep might come under attack and the PCs have to return to aid in its defense. The interesting thing is that it's not just some hook about villains attacking a keep in need of help, it's the *PC's* keep—the one they worked hard to establish as their own. That's a much more satisfying kind of motivation for a scenario.

Using the PCs' Backgrounds

One way to combine the idea of the quest-driven campaign and the player-driven campaign is to use the PCs themselves, or at least their backgrounds, as plot hooks for a quest. For example, a mysterious message comes from one of the PCs' fathers asking for help against a local magistrate that's trying to steal his land. Although this is purely a DM-created plot hook, the player is motivated for reasons of his own.

The more detailed the character's background, the better. If a player has created a backstory involving a family curse and a lost book that contains the secret for ending the curse, the DM can use that as a springboard for a quest to find the book. In fact, a good DM realizes that if the player set up such a thing, he's in effect *asking* for that to be a plot hook. Perhaps the most common such potential plot hook that players like to use is the "I don't know who my real parents were" background. Don't hesitate to use it.

When the players give you material, whether as part of their background or just simply as a goal, always make use of it. It's the clearest way to present the players with just the kind of campaign and adventures that interest them. And it makes the PCs an actual part of the campaign setting, not just visitors.

Next Time: It's time to get into the thick of things. Where is the campaign going to go and how is it going to get there? We'll examine plotting and planning for a campaign, and how to tailor the setting to the campaign and the campaign to the setting.

Monte Cook is the author of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. *Check out his publishing company, Malhavoc Press, at montecook.com.*

Adventure Modules

All adventure modules, whether bought in the store, written for a convention, or found in this magazine, are quest driven. The writers of an adventure module meant to be used in someone else's campaign (or in a one-shot game) can't possibly know what the characters who will play will be like, let alone what motivates them, so there is no other option than to provide some plot hooks and hope that one of them will intrigue the PCs and get them into the action. Even if the module comes with pregenerated characters, and each of them has a background filled with reasons and motivations to go on the adventure as written, these are still motivations forced on the PCs, and not truly player motivations.

This is not a criticism of adventure modules, merely an undeniable fact. Since it's so hard for a DM to plan ahead in a player-driven campaign, it's simply impossible for an adventure module writer to do so.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

BY F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER
ILLUSTRATED BY UDON WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH AND GALA FERRIERE

Sometimes the law just isn't enough. Whether things need to be put right or a grudge needs settling, cold hard gold can often bring a kind of justice beyond the reach of the law. Manhunters, bloodhounds, bounty hunters, these specialized mercenaries are often little better than the criminals they persue. Operating on the fringes of society and outside the confines of the law, they offer their services to any who can meet—or set a bounty high enough to exceed—their often outrageous prices, no questions asked.

While the stereotype of a rugged ex-soldier or a survivalist ranger are tried and tested templates, the magic and special abilities unique to many D&D campaigns afford bounty hunters a host of potent tools to stalk their prey. From hunters relying on steel and stealth to those who use magic to snarl their marks, these characters make determined allies for any party, and even more dedicated opponents.

THE REGULAR

Not every warrior is cut out for the life of a bounty hunter. Requiring a combination of exceptional greed and a blatant disregard for life, these professionals make their living by ruining lives for profit. Although in some cases they hunt down legitimate criminals, or find employment with people or organizations with noble intentions, making a career out of hunting sentient beings for personal gain is immoral at best.

Essentially specialized mercenaries, bounty hunters generally work for an open bounty, meaning that those who set the bounty owe the hunter nothing unless he completes the job. This limited connection to both employer and prey prevents bounty hunters from feeling personally involved, a distance that most prefer.

Despite their sinister reputations, bounty hunters are not by definition assassins. In fact, retuning prey alive is a condition of most bounties, although sometimes merely a body suffices. A patron might hire a bounty hunter to fulfill a variety of tasks, from hunting down enemies to returning victims of kidnappings to finding a wayward heir.

Few individuals train to become professional bounty hunters; instead they fall into it from another line of work. Discarded soldiers who have known nothing but war their entire lives occasionally step into this role, and rangers can easily turn their

specialized abilities to hunting sentient creatures. The immobilizing and enchanting magic of powerful mages makes them skilled manhunters, capable of forgoing physical violence. Regardless of their backgrounds, bounty hunters almost exclusively work alone or in small groups, to avoid having to split their precious bounties.

Presented here is a generic bounty hunter of exactly the type that might be hired by wronged nobles, criminal syndicates, far-reaching governments, or any other employer seeking to have an individual returned.

Bounty Hunter, male human ranger 2: CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8; hp 12; Init –1, Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk +3 melee (1d8, masterwork flail); Full Atk +3 melee (1d8, masterwork flail) and +1 melee (1d6 nonlethal, sap); SA favored enemy humanoid (human) +2, two-weapon combat style; SQ wild empathy +1; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Gather Information +1, Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Intimidate +1, Knowledge (nature) +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4, Survival +6, Use Rope +2.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Track[B], Two Weapon Fighting[B].

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 leather armor, masterwork flail, sap, net, sling, 100 sling bullets, backpack, 5 caltrops, healer's kit, bullseye lantern, masterwork manacles, 50-foot silk rope, 2 tanglefoot bags, 3 *potions of cure light wounds,* 131 gp.

THE JUDGE

Cadsvine Chartz has never aligned himself with any particular religion or deity, but rather serves death in its most abstract form. Believing that for each creature there is a specific moment at which they're meant to die, Chartz seeks out with murderous intent those he believes have evaded their proper moment of death. This emotionless dispensation of inscrutable "justice" has led Chartz to be called "The Judge."

Judge Chartz is not a typical bounty hunter. Those who hire Chartz pay him in advance for the time he spends seeking his quarry, and he promises no more. Once he finds those he hunts, he passes death's judgment upon them, a trial that usually ends in the target's death. However, on rare occasions, Chartz deems his prey not yet fit to die and moves on, usually to his employer's impotent fury.

Judge Cadsvine Chartz, male elf cleric 9: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d6+9; hp 43; Init +0, Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (2d4+4/x4, *+1 human bane scythe*); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (2d4+4/x4, *+1 human bane scythe*); SA rebuke undead, spells; SQ elven traits, low-light vision; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Listen +9, Search +8, Spellcraft +2, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Investigator.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 9): 0—*detect magic* (3), *inflict minor wounds* (2) (DC 13), *light*; 1st—*bane* (DC 14), *bless, cause fear*[D] (DC 14), *deathwatch, doom* (DC 14), *magic weapon*; 2nd—*bull's strength, death knell*[D] (DC 15), *eagle's splendor, enthrall* (DC 15), *hold person* (2) (DC 15); 3rd—*animate dead*[D], *bestow curse* (DC 16), *blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *speak with dead*; 4th—*dimensional anchor* (+6 ranged touch), *divination*[D], *lesser planar ally*; 5th—*raise dead, slay living*[D] (DC 18).

[D]: Domain spell. *Domains:* Death (death touch 1/day, damage 9d6), Knowledge (cast divination spells at +1 caster level; all Knowledge skills are class skills).

Languages: Common, Elven, Orc.

Possessions: +1 half-plate, +1 human bane scythe, cloak of resistance +1, potion of bull's Strength, potion of cure moderate wounds, masterwork manacles, 282 gp.

THE CHARMER

Few can agree on any consistent description of the bounty hunter Darston Shooter. Sometimes a grizzled, dark-eyed gnome woodsman, sometimes a dashing halfling wanderer, the only thing that always remains the same is the distinctive, high-pitched tune the enigmatic mercenary whistles constantly.

Very few people know the truth that Darston herself conceals at all times; her *hat of disguise* hides a rather nondescript halfling woman. Her natural appearance doesn't suit her flair for the dramatic or her sense of what a bounty hunter should look like, and so she changes her facade with each new assignment. Of about middle age, Darston has seen much of the world and is a talented actor and musician. Putting her people skills, eclectic knowledge, and compelling music to good use, she performs for crowds wherever she travels and hunts down fugitives on the side. A good-natured soul, Shooter only takes assignments from good-aligned local governments or from people obviously wronged or seeking loved ones. Her specialty is tracking down criminals and missing persons of all types and returning them under the enchantment of her magic, music, and personality.

Darston Shooter, female halfling bard 6: CR 6; Small humanoid; HD 6d6–6; hp 17; Init +3, Spd 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +0; Atk +8 melee (1d4+1, *+1 sickle*); Full Atk +8 melee (1d4+1, *+1 sickle*); SA bardic music, *fascinate,* inspire competence, inspire courage +1, spells, *suggestion*; SQ bardic knowledge +7, halfling traits, countersong; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +7, Climb +2, Concentration +3, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +6, Hide +10, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Perform (act) +6, Perform (wind instrument) +12, Search +2, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +2, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +5, Use Rope +5.

Feats: Persuasive, Track, Weapon Finesse (sickle).

Bard Spells Known (3/4/3; caster level 6): 0—*dancing lights, daze* (DC13), *detect magic, lullaby* (DC13), *mage hand, message*; 1st—*charm person* (DC14), *expeditious retreat, hypnotism* (DC14), *sleep* (DC14); 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC15), *calm emotions* (DC15), *hold person* (DC15).

Languages: Common, Elven, Halfling.

Possessions: +1 leather armor, +1 sickle, hat of disguise, 2 potions of cure light wounds, backpack, hooded lantern, 2 tanglefoot bags, masterwork flute 105 gp.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

BY RUSSELL BROWN
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH AND GALA FERRIERE

Your PCs have killed the last monster and headed back to the city to sell off the loot from their last encounter. They're ready for their next adventure, and you have it all mapped out. Do you start in the tavern like you have a dozen times before, or is there a better way?

Here are twelve places in a large town or city where a new quest might begin. Each location has something that sets it apart from the rest of the city, and the description also includes reasons the PCs might visit and what types of adventure hooks can be found there.

CITY GATES

Passing though the city gates often involves running a gauntlet of hawking merchants and groping beggars. The gates are well guarded and an impassible barrier to those who cannot pay the entry tax, have been banished, or must conduct their business outside the law of the city.

The PCs usually pass through the gates on their way to and from each adventure. They may see a poor, crippled beggar singled out and taken by a nobleman's guards, or the gates may suddenly close, leaving the PCs to defend those trapped outside against an onslaught of orcs. For more gate encounter ideas, see "Enemies at the Gate" in *Dungeon* #119.

CITY WELL

At the public wells, the dregs of the city mingle with the servants of the wealthy. You can find gossip here that is often more reliable than the drunken ramblings of tavern patrons.

The PCs could visit the well to replenish their water supply, or simply pass it on their way through town. Perhaps they meet a rich woman's servant who suspects her betrothed is not human. Or they may see someone pull a discarded item or a dead body from the well.

MARKET SQUARE

The market square is an open area within the city walls that fills daily with the tents

and wagons of local farmers. The market is crowded, chaotic, and impossible for the town watch to patrol, so it is a haven for thieves and secret dealings.

The PCs probably find the market a good place to buy supplies. In addition to his produce, a farmer may bring rumors of mysterious events from the countryside, or he may be selling a strange object found buried on his land.

MONASTERY

Monasteries are home to devout ascetics, people whose marriage has failed, and criminals who have taken religious vows to avoid prison. Monks are caretakers of ancient writings, preserving them in deep vaults and copying them in cold, poorly-lit scriptoriums where not even a candle flame is permitted. Most monasteries are also places of temporary sanctuary—an accused man can remain there for a few days, beyond the reach of the law.

PCs may visit a monastery for healing or religious insight. Their adventure may begin with the story of an accused criminal or the ramblings of an old monk who has seen cryptic clues in ancient texts.

PRISON

Almost every city has some sort of prison, ranging from a dungeon managed by the city watch or the temple of St. Cuthbert to a private prison run by thugs willing to arrest anyone based on any accusation and a fee.

The party might visit the prison to free one of the PCs accused of petty crime. One of the prisoners could beg them to bail him out because time is running out to save his small town. Another prisoner might offer the PCs a share in a hidden treasure.

PUBLIC BATHS

Those that can afford the small fee can clean themselves in a public pool fed by hot springs. Public baths often provide saunas, massages, and scented body oils. The baths are a mixing place for all but the highest and lowest classes, though individual pools are segregated by gender and possibly race. Weapons and armor are not allowed.

Someone the PCs meet might tactfully suggest that they should visit the baths. A worried bather may recognize them as adventures based on their scars and ask them for help. An enemy following the PCs may sneak a dagger into the baths and attack them while they are without their gear.

SHIP IN PORT

A city's ports contain ships from distant lands, carrying exotic cargoes and passengers. Ships are generally subject to the law of their homeland, even while docked in a foreign port, but most of the time ship crews are pretty easygoing when it comes to rules.

PCs may visit a port looking for passage or unusual goods. Once there, they may see a ship flying the flag of a country that catches their interest. Once aboard a ship, the PCs may find themselves on their way to a lost island or in the center of a conflict between nations.

SPEAKER'S CORNER

Large cities often have a public area where anyone can speak their mind to the passing crowd. This may be a small podium at the corner of a park, or the steps of a public building. An exceptional orator, or someone who expresses what many people think but are afraid to say, can draw a large crowd.

The PCs can't fail to notice the crowd and the speaker as they pass by the speaker's corner. The speaker may reveal something important that the public does not know before hired thugs silence him. Perhaps a heckler in the crowd says something that interests the PCs.

SPELLCASTER'S SHOP

Merchant spellcasters like to hide their shops in back alleys, and often protect them with wards and shield them against scrying. Their shops usually smell of exotic spell components and moldy parchment and are filled with potions and magic items, many of which are worthless decoys.

The PCs may approach the mage needing a peculiar spell cast, or they may be looking for an unusual scroll. The mage might have an unusual or interesting item for sale in his shop, or he could demand payment in the form of a quest for the party. For some sample merchant spellcasters, check out "Spells for Sale" in *Dungeon* #119.

STABLES

For most people, long distance travel means horses. Once they reach their destination, however, they don't want to worry about their mount, nor do they want to try to forge though the crowded city streets on horseback. Many inns provide stabling for horses as a service to their patrons, but many stables are independent businesses, boarding horses while the riders find other places to stay.

The PCs may visit a stable to board their horses, and they may return periodically to see how they are being treated. A greedy stable boy may hint to the PCs that he overheard a wealthy nobleman say something incriminating, or the PCs may come across an interesting item dropped by a rider while dismounting.

SUPPLY MERCHANT

This merchant sells supplies to those venturing into the wilderness—rations, lanterns, waterskins, tools, and torches. Since most adventurers pass through his shop before they head out, he often knows who left town recently, and where they were headed.

When the PCs visit this merchant to purchase supplies, they may hear about another party that set off and never returned. Or they may find a previous party has sold the merchant a map to the lair of a fearsome creature they could not defeat.

TEMPLE

The style and function of a temple depends upon the deity it serves. A temple of Kord may have an attached arena which sports competition amongst athletes and gladiators from all corners of the world. The temple of Boccob may be a maze of constantly changing doorways and passages with a magic shop at its center. The temple of St. Cuthbert may include a prison and a training yard for town militia.

The PCs may visit a temple for the healing and restorative powers of its clerics, or for the special services offered by the church. They may be drawn into adventure by another wounded visitor to the temple, or by a cleric whose powers of divination have brought him special knowledge.

DUNGEONS WITH DIMENSION

BY ALEC AUSTIN
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

After a while, the 10-foot-wide corridors of traditional dungeons can become constricting. PCs avoid barriers with spells like *fly* and *dimension door*, or cut passages through rock walls with *stone shape* and *disintegrate*. Before denying players their toys or throwing up your hands and deciding that the dungeon is dead, you should consider moving the dungeon experience to a different venue.

TRENCH DUNGEONS

A trench dungeon is a maze that has been cut into the ground with no ceiling. Characters can climb on top of the walls to survey the layout of the dungeon around them, and *levitate* or *fly* to gain the high ground during a fight. The top of the walls and bottom of the trenches allow for three-dimensional combat inside the dungeon. The battle can shift back and forth between the two levels as characters maneuver to gain an

advantage. For more information on multilevel combat, see "Lairs With Flair" in *Dungeon* #114.

Complications: Walls made of packed sand might collapse if characters climb them, while walls of packed mud or magically shaped water might be permeable, allowing ambushers to hide inside them. Aerial predators, such as wyverns or dragons, might make flying or climbing atop the dungeon walls a risky proposition. And some dungeons might have several levels of trenches, cut progressively deeper into the ground with bridges and pits forming a massive multi-level labyrinth.

Example Trench Dungeon: The Maze of the Mad Pharaoh is cut into sandstone cliffs which rise from the desert. Its walls are 30 feet high and always at least 5 feet thick. Over the years, drifts of sand have blown into the depths of the maze, completely filling some passageways and making others difficult to traverse. A blue dragon patrols the sky overhead, and swoops down to hunt characters that climb out of the trenches.

FLOATING DUNGEONS

Whether they rise out of the ocean, climb the slopes of a mountain, or are suspended high in the air, floating dungeons are without walls or ceilings. The only barrier separating one "room" of such a dungeon from the next is air, water, lava, or something more sinister. Walkways may span the gaps between platforms, or characters may have to use magic or skills such as Climb, Jump, or Swim to move through the dungeon. No matter what the obstacle, the threat of falling is omnipresent, adding an additional element of excitement to an already dangerous situation.

Complications: Aerial, aquatic, or incorporeal enemies can attack the party as they traverse the gaps between patches of solid ground. Foes might try to bull rush characters off ledges, while attackers from a nearby platform pepper the party with spells or arrows across the intervening void. Since there are no walls to divide the dungeon's inhabitants from each other, creatures in adjacent rooms often form a single encounter.

Example Floating Dungeon: The Obsidian Ziggurat is built on a foundation of cloud, five thousand feet above the plains of Ur. To reach the Ziggurat, one must climb the Stair of Ten Thousand Steps and negotiate its nine landings. A different faction competing for the favor of the Lord of the Ziggurat inhabits each landing. Those who would explore the ziggurat must defeat these guardians, turn them against each other, or somehow bypass them before they can hope to ascend the ziggurat's many tiers.

VERTICAL DUNGEONS

Most dungeons are laid out horizontally, built by people that walk from one room to the next. Some creatures, however, construct dungeons by connecting rooms or areas that are vertically adjacent. A beholder lair, with its rooms stacked on top of one another, is a vertical dungeon, as is the ramp spiraling up the inside wall of a quarry or a cylindrical tower. Vertical dungeons often contain pits or chimneys that connect multiple levels, ledges and overhangs, ramps and staircases, and high ceilings. Combat in a vertical dungeon tends to move up and down as much as side to side, giving characters with magical flight or good athletic skills a chance to shine.

Complications: Many of the complications and encounters found in floating dungeons also apply here, but the enclosed nature of a vertical dungeon makes effects like *levitate* and *spider climb* particularly powerful. If characters become too focused on the vertical axis, it can be fun to ambush them from horizontal side passages.

Example Vertical Dungeon: The Giant's Flute is a shaft almost a mile long, rising vertically through the heart of Frost Mountain. Those who explore its depths or use it as an escape route must navigate a broken-down spiraling ramp that rises the entire length of the shaft. As they travel, the party must pass through chambers inhabited by creatures that can float or cling to walls, such as giant spiders and beholders. Every so often a stone bridge connects the ramp to a tower floating in the shaft's center with no visible means of support.

BIZARRE DUNGEONS

In a bizarre dungeon spatial relationships don't follow the usual rules, gravity fails or becomes strange, or transit from one area to the next requires teleportation or planar travel. Dungeons shaped like mobius strips, hypercubes, or coiling through the bowels of an immense monster add a bizarre touch to a campaign, as do dungeons that make extensive use of teleport traps and illusory walls. The only requirement for a bizarre dungeon is that it must be some combination of weird, creepy, and cool.

Complications: Anything your imagination can come up with fits right into a bizarre dungeon. The *Manual of the Planes*, novels, movies, video games, and published adventures are great places to look for ideas. The intestines of a demon lord might contain lava hazards, poisonous gas, and pits that spawn minor demons, while an illusory jungle might conceal buildings and real vegetation in addition to pit traps and monsters.

Example Bizarre Dungeon: For 5 miles around The Squashed City, the sky is a solid object that hangs 30 feet above the ground. Those who approach the Squashed City by air find themselves flying just beneath the sky itself when they enter the anomaly. Inside the city, a soft breeze blows ever inward toward the city's center. People who make it that far find the sky has been smashed open, leaving a gaping rift. Those who approach within 30 feet of the rift must make a Strength Check (DC 18) to hold onto a nearby building or be sucked into the rift and delivered to a destination of your choice.

STOPOVERS

BY RUSSELL BROWN
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

Your players have many miles to go, it's getting dark, and their map shows wilderness for miles around. Is it going to be another night camped just off the road, huddled around a smoldering fire with the PCs taking turns on watch? Why not give them a more interesting campsite?

Here are twelve places where traveling PCs might spend the night. Each includes an adventure hook, but they are also a great way to add some interesting detail to an otherwise boring night in camp.

ABANDONED HAMLET

This small collection of dilapidated buildings appears to be the remains of a remote village. Half of the buildings have been burned to the ground, but a couple still have enough of their roof thatching to repel rain and wind. What drove the occupants away and put the buildings to the torch? Was it a territorial pyrohydra (*Monster Manual* 156) that still patrols the ruin?

BRIDGE

A wooden plank bridge spans a small river here, deep in the wilderness. Passing travelers and campaigning armies have repaired the structure many times over the years, so now it reflects a wide variety of cultural styles. The bridge gives some shelter to the banks beneath it, but there may be something lurking in the river. Furthermore, anyone crossing the bridge almost certainly notices the PCs huddling beneath it. A band of hobgoblins (*Monster Manual* 153) sometimes camps nearby, robbing travelers or charging large tolls to anyone crossing the bridge.

CAVE

Erosion has formed a small cave in the side of a low hill. It provides safety from the elements and some degree of warmth during cold months. Like most cozy nooks, however, this cave is inhabited. An albino dire bear (hp 98, *Monster Manual* 163) resides here, feeding off the local wildlife and the occasional traveler. During the winter months, a group of five wild elves (warrior 1) and their shaman (adept 5) sometimes visits the hibernating bear to venerate it and perform rituals around it.

CLIFF

A 60-foot-tall overhanging cliff stands here. It grants some degree of shelter from the elements and eliminates one direction of enemy attack. A large nest sits on a ledge 40 feet up, but doesn't appear to be occupied. The cliff face is carved with names and symbols from centuries of weary travelers. One set of symbols looks like a rough map to other, similar shelters. One of the shelters on the map has been recently crossed out, and a strange horned head has been drawn beside it.

DRUID CREATION

A traveling druid created this roadside shelter many years ago using a combination of *wood shape*, *transmute mud to rock*, and *wall of stone*. It looks like a jumble of stone walls, bent trees, and crude thatching, and it's overgrown with vines and branches. It covers an area roughly 10 feet by 20 feet and the

ground beneath it is littered with the refuse of other travelers. The druid also cast *awaken* on a nearby tree and charged it with protecting travelers camping at the shelter and making sure they do no harm to the surrounding wilderness. The awakened tree is treated as a huge animated object (*Monster Manual* 14), but gains the plant type and has Intelligence 12, Wisdom 13, and Charisma 8.

GRAVEYARD AND TOMBS

An ancient graveyard sits on a hill overlooking the road. Its crude burial stones are almost totally obscured by foliage, but several tomb entrances can be clearly seen, delving into the side of the hill. Each tomb is 5 feet by 10 feet and all been have entered by thieves or animals looking for spoils. There is almost nothing left of the original occupants, but a thorough search (DC 20) of the tombs reveals a skeletal hand buried underneath a few inches of soil, wearing a *ring of sustenance*. The ring is cursed so that it also gives its wearer vulnerability to cold.

HOLLOW TREE

An ancient, gnarled tree still clings to life, even though its trunk has been hollowed out into a 5-foot-diameter chamber. The floor of this snug room is a thick, soft layer of old leaves and moss. Although it's an inviting campsite for a very small party, this tree may have special meaning to a dryad or a local tribe of wood elves.

HUNTER'S SHACK

This small hunting cabin lies far from the nearest town or village, yet remains accessible by road. It consists of a simple 10-foot by 20-foot shelter with a small fireplace. Pots, pans, and cooking utensils are piled on a crude table. A half-full barrel of flour stands against the far wall. Strips of dried, salted meat hang from the ceiling. Will the hunter (ranger 8) and his constrictor snake animal companion (*Monster Manual* 279) return to find the PCs in his home? Will he attack them for their trespass or forgive them and offer his services as a host and guide?

OLD COPPER MINE

The entrance to this hillside mine is hidden from the road by vines and small trees

(Spot DC 15). It consists of a ragged 10-foot by 20-foot wooden lean-to covering an 8-foot-diameter shaft entrance. The shaft widens as it drops 40 feet into a 30-foot-diameter chamber. Old rotting timbers shore up the ceiling of the chamber in places, and broken and discarded mining implements litter the floor. The chamber's delicate ceiling is likely to collapse if subjected to vibrations or very loud noises. See Cave-ins and Collapses, *Dungeon Master's Guide* 66. A cete of badgers (hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 268) now lives here, and 1d4 can be found in the cavern at any one time.

OVERHANGING TREE

The thick, drooping branches of this large pine tree create a 20-foot-diameter shelter protected from wind and rain. There is enough room to start a fire underneath the overhang, but the dead branches and pine needles that cover the ground are bone dry. Any fire built here can quickly spread out of control. A successful Survival check (DC 15) reveals the danger to the PCs and allows them to build a fire safely.

TUNNEL

This hole in the ground, partially covered by brush, is just large enough for the PCs to squeeze through. Further in, it leads to a maze of long tunnels and a few larger chambers. A purple worm originally dug out this complex. Eventually it accidentally broke through into a natural complex of caves extending for miles in every direction. The creature has been gone for years. If the PCs explore too far down into these tunnels, they may find the entrance to the much more dangerous caverns below.

WATCHTOWER ON A HILL

Even in remote wilderness areas, army commanders like to keep track of enemy movement. This wooden tower rises 30 feet above a modest hill beside the road. It provides shelter and a spectacular view of the countryside for miles around. When tensions rise between neighboring kingdoms, the army dispatches three lookouts (warrior 1) and one captain (fighter 3) with a light warhorse to this watchtower. If the lookouts spot trouble, the captain rides to the nearest town to warn his superiors. When there are no soldiers here, the tower is sometimes used by three gnoll brigands (10 hp each, *Monster Manual* 130) to watch for likely prey coming along the road.

Downer's brother Aristide and a pack of devils have cornered the heroes in the thieves' guild headquarters. While hiding the relic, the Hlolok, Downer has run afoul of a deadly chain devil.

Story and art by **Kyle Stanley Hunter.** Lettering by **Sean Glenn.** Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A **Super Unicorn** production. **www.superunicorn.com**

DOWNER, PLEASE DON'T HURT ME.
YAAAA!
POW
DAMMIT, I FORGOT THEY COULD DO THAT.*
clink clink
*MONSTER MANUAL, PAGE 54
GO! GET HIM!
HURRR?
FABULOUS.
WOW BRO, THAT WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT.
TO SHOW MY APPRECIATION, I THINK I'LL LET YOU LIVE. MAYBE.
TO BE CONTINUED

RETURN OF THE GAMER (PART 2)

Illustration by Stan Shaw

My party consisted of myself and my trusted friend Andrew, a cleric/fighter. Like all Monty Hauls, we met in a tavern and fortified ourselves with drink. A short while later we entered the hotel—I mean, dungeon. It was dimly lit, and filled with furrie—er, furry creatures, vampires, and other adventurers. We carefully made our way down a long corridor and entered a 20 × 40 room.

Around a table in the center of the room sat several rogues, playing a card game. The leader was tall and thin, with a devilish glint in his eye.

He stood and approached us. "I am Evil Stevie, from the land of Jackson," he said. "If you'd like to leave this room alive, sit at my table and play with me and my fellow rogues!" He put his hands on his hips and cackled.

"I've heard of you and your devilish games, Evil Stevie," I said. "What is this challenge you'd make?"

"I challenge you to a simple game of *Munchkin*. Surely you are brave enough to accept."

"I think you should do as he says," Andrew counseled, "for he is a Master Gamer and he is quick to anger."

I turned and accepted the challenge. I sat at at his table, and realized that the room had filled with other adventurers... almost as if the contest were scheduled, and announced in some other area of the dungeon, or on the Internet.

Behind me, Andrew called on Pelor to aid me, and a card appeared in my hand. I read it aloud. "Heart of the Anomaly. +2 bonus, +4 for Gadgeteeers, +1 if signed by Wil Wheaton."

I looked up.

"Wil Wheaton! That's me!" I said. "If I sign this, I get a pretty nice bonus..."

I reached for a pen... and discovered that I did not have one on my person.

"Oh, man! Does anyone have a pen?"

The rogues burst into laughter. It was clear that they'd planned this cruel trick.

"No pens here! Ha ha ha ha ha!"

I turned to the gathered rabble. "I have 1d6 gold for anyone who gives me a pen!"

A flurry of pens, markers, and pencils were thrust into my face. I took the nearest Sharpie and signed the card.

"Curses!" Evil Stevie announced. "You're clever, indeed."

"Why thank you," I said, and the game began.

We fought a long and pitched battle, against many terrifying opponents, like an undead horse, a plutonium dragon, and the most fearsome creature I've ever seen: a lawyer.

There was underhanded trickery, temporary alliances that were quickly broken, and much, much laughter and mirth.

After many hours of play, however, I eventually triumphed, and there was much rejoicing.

"You have beaten me at my own game," Evil Stevie said, "you are truly the biggest *Munchkin* of them all."

It wasn't until much, much later that I realized this was not a title to be worn with pride.

•

Near the end of our first day of dungeon crawling, I found myself surrounded by a group of 10th-level geeks, many of them with nerd familiars. While I attempted to answer their many questions and satisfy their requests to scribe scrolls, Andrew located a secret door in the wall beside us, which spun us out of harm's way and into a 50 × 50 room, filled with games.

"This is fantastic!" I said. "Look at all these games!"

"I thought you'd like this room," he said with a smile. "This will be a sanctuary as long as you desire it."

I ran to one wall, and pulled out several games: *Frag*, *Spooks*, *Chez Geek*, and *Chez Greek*.

"You mean we can play games all night?" I said.

Just then, the secret door spun around again, and three men appeared. They were friends of Andrew's, and all of them worked for the Rogue Leader, Evil Stevie.

"Yep. We thought you'd like a chance to just geek out."

And geek out I did. We sat together at the table and played games well into the wee hours of the morning. It was one of the most purely joyous times I've had in years, and reminded me why I became a gamer in the first place.

"I haven't had this much fun since high school," I said, shortly after my character had been blown to bits in *Frag*.

"Don't you mean 'since I was a young bard in training back in my village, because you're writing this like it's an adventure?'"

"Yeah, that," I said, "Way to break the fourth wall."

Check out Wil's blog at wilwheaton.net.